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**For better, not
for worse**







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FOR BETTER, NOT FOR WORSE.

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BY
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18 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
1882

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FOR BETTER, NOT FOR WORSE.

CHAPTER I.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

A MISERABLY wet and windy October day had worn on in all its dulness and bleakness. Dusk came, and it still rained and blew, it was still dull and bleak, in that usually miserable quarter of London which lies between the more genteel portion of the great Mudford Estate and the muddy waters of the Thames. Through all this storm a manly figure, with a steady purpose, bent its way towards a narrow street of small dimensions, but which, in contrast to the neighbouring thoroughfares and no-thoroughfares, was of neat and orderly appearance. This street had no exit, but was bounded at the end by the iron railings of a churchyard. The storm charged fiercely at the wayfarer as he turned into this secluded spot. He was evidently a stranger to the neighbourhood, for after passing up one side

of the street and partly down the other he stopped as if in indecision at an open door. Within this door stood a dark-haired, pale-faced child, with her little shawl drawn over her head, evidently expecting some one. Seeing the stranger, she asked :

‘Are you looking for old Mr. Bolton, sir?’ then observing in his manner an answer in the affirmative, she quickly added : ‘He lives here, sir ; if you come upstairs, please, I will show you his room.’

Throwing her shawl over her arm, the child, with a light and fairy-like step, hurried up the steep and awkward staircase to the top story, where she rapped gently at a door, opened it and entered. Going quietly to a bed in an opposite corner, she whispered softly :

‘Mr. Bolton, here is a gentleman wishes to see you.’

She then passed to the chimney-piece, took down a candle, which she lighted, and was about to retire, when the old man beckoned her to his bedside. Few more touching sights has this week-day world witnessed than the scene in that attic. Not much romance, surely, our patient readers will say, in a rickety old room, a poor old man and a pauper child ! Perhaps not, but we shall see ; if not romantic, it was real. Heaven knows it does the human heart good to see reality in any shape or form in this false and flattering age. Being real, it was touching.

The room was poorly, but nevertheless substantially furnished, and most neat and clean. There was that luxurious piece of furniture which one so frequently meets in the homes of the sober and struggling poor, a large chest of drawers, on the top of which was displayed quite a profusion of glasses, cups, china images and nicknacks of not over-artistic design or perfect finish. The walls were literally covered with pictures of various shapes and subjects. A battle here, the Iron Duke there, Her Gracious Majesty and Lord Raglan, some few religious prints, highly coloured, and others of like nature, met the eye on every side. A couple of wooden chairs, a small bedstead, a little stool with basin and pitcher and a deal table, completed the furniture of the humble abode. He who lay sick upon the bed was a fine, handsome, soldierly old man with a flowing grey beard and venerable head. The child who bent over him was about fifteen years old, rather tall, but delicately and lightly formed. Her dress with its long sleeves was very neat, and of a dark common material, over which was a pinafore gathered at the waist with a band; spotless in its whiteness, but patched and darned here and there. Her long black hair hung in loose profusion over her shoulders. Her face was singularly pleasing, more intelligent and handsome than beautiful. It was too marked with thought and care, too delicate and wan to form the ideal beauty which it suggested.

The large dark-brown eyes deeply fringed, the forehead high and intellectual, the lips thin and somewhat compressed, gave to the thoughtful face of the dark-haired child an expression which, once seen, it was difficult to banish from the memory. Such was the child upon whom the stranger gazed as he entered the room.

‘Lizzie,’ said the sick man, ‘Lizzie dear, when your mother comes in, tell her I should like to speak to her.’ Then turning to the stranger, he added: ‘I am sorry, Doctor, to have dragged you out on such a night; but I was so ill when I sent this afternoon, when the good Priest came, that he gave me a letter to send round to the Dispensary.’

The Doctor, all this time, had stood with an abstracted air, his eyes riveted on the child, who, after raising the poor sick patient, had quietly busied herself with putting together the fire, and then noiselessly retired. Hearing the word ‘Dispensary,’ he turned to the speaker and said in a somewhat embarrassed manner:

‘I beg your pardon, but you were saying——’

‘That I was very sorry——’

‘Pray make no excuse, my good man.’

Then taking the sick man’s hand he felt his pulse, asked him kindly several questions, assured him that there was no danger, that what he wanted was quiet, a little attentive nursing, and that he would soon get round again.

‘I will put you up a little medicine if you can send round for it this evening.’

‘My little nurse, the child who has just left us, will be only too glad to go for it.’

‘But,’ urged the Doctor, ‘the child looks delicate, and it’s such a wet and stormy night—couldn’t you find a more robust messenger?’

‘I see,’ said the old man, ‘you are a kind-hearted gentleman. But, deary me, little Lizzie has at times to rough the storm: the lot of the fatherless poor is a very hard one!’

The Doctor had drawn a chair to the bedside and sat down while speaking.

‘You seem interested in that child, to judge from your looks,’ continued the sick man.

‘You judge rightly. *I am* interested, and should much like to know who and what she is.’

‘Well, that’s Lizzie Mount: she is the favourite, the pet of us all. A more gentle little creature never breathed, yet she has a good spirit and a mighty strong will of her own on some points. I’ve been in many a land as an old soldier, and before and since then as a trusted servant. I’ve seen the daughters of many a lord and lady, yet for gentleness and sweetness of manner I’d back my little nurse agen them all.’

‘So she nurses you, does she?’

‘Why, you see, her mother is a widow woman, and is out at work all day, and little Lizzie is a teacher at our school hard by; but between hours, and when her mother can spare her, she runs up here and tends on me, a poor lone man, who haven’t

kith or kin to care for me. God bless her kind little heart, and send her as much kindness as she shows to others !' said the old soldier, with tears in his eyes.

'So she's fatherless ! has she no sisters or brothers ?'

'No, she's an only child ; and her mother, like myself, has none of her own about her. Lizzie's only companion is another little teacher at her own school, a little older than herself. They are so much together that we folks down here call them "The twins." But surely you're a stranger about here, or you must have seen them together.'

'Yes, I've been but a short time at the Dispensary ; but,' added the Doctor as he rose to go, 'I hope to know my poor neighbours and the neighbourhood better before long. By the way, you needn't trouble about the medicine, I'll send it.'

'May God bless you for a kind-hearted gentleman ! I'll knock for Lizzie to light you down.'

Before the Doctor could prevent him he had thumped three times on the floor with a stick ; and the child came bounding into the room, took up the light, and preceded the wondering stranger to the door.

'Good-night, my good child,' he said most kindly, but rather confusedly.

'Good-night, sir,' replied Lizzie ; 'and God bless you !'

With that child's gentle voice ringing blessings

in his ear, and with that pale face still before his eyes glancing at him through the pelting rain, in the now darker and more dreary streets, the Dispensary Doctor hurried onward in his errand of charity and compassion, with a mind filled with bitter and conflicting thoughts.

‘How strange!’ he muttered to himself. ‘That little face has brought it all back to me! The same sad expression, the same pale wan look, and yet the same sweet smile. Yet gone, gone; yes, gone for ever!’

CHAPTER II.

A SOCIAL GATHERING.

THE Dispensary Doctor’s name was George Spence. When he had finished his labour of love at the houses of the poor and at the Dispensary, he betook himself to his lodgings in Bower Street.

We suppose, before going any further, it will be expected that the patient reader be made further acquainted with the individual who is proposed to play the hero’s part in this eventful history. George Spence was about forty years of age. His hair, though he was still in middle life, was prematurely white as of an old man. His eyes were of a dark piercing brown; he wore no beard or

moustache which would hide the marks of care and sorrow written on his face. His whole form and features were those of a man about whom there was nothing either effeminate on the one hand, or harsh on the other. His kind open face, his bright eye, and the expression of the mouth told at once that he was a man of a large heart and great depth of affection. Yet about him there was a certain restlessness, and a reserve which was always painfully visible. It seemed as though his history might be summed up in the opening words of the old song :

‘I have a silent sorrow here,
A grief I’ll ne’er impart :
It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
But it consumes my heart.’

What that silent sorrow was, perhaps no one knew—certainly not young Willie Nelson, who shared with him his lodgings in Bower Street.

It was past six, and still raining hard, as George entered his rooms. The first object he saw was his fair-haired young friend, got up in evening dress, listlessly leaning against the mantelpiece.

‘Well, George,’ said he, referring to his watch ; ‘how late you are, man ! And what on earth’s the matter with you ? You look as pale as death ; are you ill ?’

‘It’s all right, Willie ; I’ve been detained by particular business, and it’s an awfully trying night. I’m sorry I’ve kept you waiting ; but they’re never

over-punctual, we shall be in plenty of time. I'll get ready at once.'

'Well, look sharp; for I hate to be late.'

In due time the two friends, seated in a hansom, rattled along the noisy streets westward to Marley Street. On their arrival they were greeted by their hostess with that common, nothing-meaning greeting wherewith late-comers are so often greeted: 'We had just given you up!'

This said hostess was Mrs. Byrne, and a very homely personage she was, both in appearance and manners. Though perfectly at her ease, it was quite evident that she had not been born in the position which she then occupied. Mr. B. was a fair counterpart of his good lady, a fine, open-hearted Irishman, who had worked his way up in life—report said in the boot trade—and was now living 'in a very independent way' on a good fortune. His family consisted of a son who had an appointment in the old country, and two daughters, Effie and Violet. The elder was about three-and-twenty, while Violet had not quite completed her teens. They were both of very pleasing appearance, but by no means handsome. They were not much alike, either in outward figure and form or dispositions. Effie was a sparkling, somewhat flighty girl, with a large percentage of 'worldliness' in her character; while 'little Vi,' as she was called, was habitually quiet, and decidedly of a pious turn of mind.

‘I suppose,’ said Effie, ‘the Doctor has been wasting his precious time among those low and horrid people, who are never grateful, and would like to murder all of us in our beds if they had the chance ! I *do* detest the dirty lower orders !’

‘For shame, Effie !’ said her sister. Then turning to her mother she said : ‘You have not introduced the Doctor and Mr. Nelson to our friend.’

Our friend turned out to be a young lady of some twenty-one summers—Miss May Cumberland—fair, very fair, moderately tall, retired, and very handsome. Some young ladies who had seen her had certainly said that she would have been very handsome if her eyes had not been quite so blue, or if her nose had been a little more delicately shaped, and so forth with regard to each separate feature ; but as in our humble estimation these young ladies were hypercritical, we adhere to our former statement, and venture to declare Miss May ‘very handsome.’

A Captain Jackson and his wife, and a Mr. and Mrs. Cummings completed the party. The Captain and his spouse were nice unpretending people, but Mr. Cummings was a vulgar man, with much shirt-front and much tall-talk. As for Mrs. C., she was a lady only by position, and in whatever school she had been trained she had learned neither manners nor grammar. She talked much and very loudly, and at dinner used her knife and fork with distended fingers, offending in many obtrusive ways

against politeness and etiquette. But money is a great god, and gilds the most uneducated ways. Society, though much against the grain, bows down, and in an amiable and tolerant manner accepts them.

All things considered, the dinner was a success, and passed off pleasantly enough. George had Effie on his right, and Miss Cumberland on his left, and was confronted by young Nelson and little Vi.

‘I’m awfully interested in the lower orders, Mr. Spence,’ said Effie, ‘I assure you ; but really you must find them very unromantic—terribly prosy, I should imagine.’

‘Quite the contrary, I assure you,’ replied George, with rather an abstracted air.

‘Come now, Doctor ! let us have a romance in real life, if romance be possible among the lower classes. I’ll be bound, now, you’ve been captivated by some little flower-girl, you know, as Tom Hood says :

“ Poor little Peggy hawks roses from street to street !”

Come now, Doctor ! open confession, you know.’

The Doctor, without seeming to heed the young lady’s taunt, replied by simply completing the quotation from the poet :

“ Poor little Peggy hawks roses from street to street
Till—think of that, you who think life so sweet—
She hates the smell of roses.”

Effie bit her lips, and continued her dinner in silence. Vi looked at her, as much as to say,

‘Serves you right.’ Miss Cumberland, who seemed much interested in the conversation, quietly observed to George :

‘By your manner, Mr. Spence, I should think you were very devoted to the poor. Might I ask you, do you spend much time amongst them ?’

‘Well, to be candid with you, Miss Cumberland, having little or nothing to do, and wanting occupation, I have given my services for a time to a Dispensary in a very crowded part of this great city.’

‘Indeed ! might I ask in *which* part ?’

The Doctor then mentioned the district which he visited. Miss Cumberland coloured, and gave a perceptible start.

‘Really, you interest me,’ she observed. ‘Have you been long there ?’

‘Not long. In fact, I only entered on my work a few days since.’

‘It is indeed strange,’ she said ; ‘for, no doubt, we shall some day or other be meeting in these “unromantic localities,” as Miss Byrne would call them.’

‘How so, Miss Cumberland ?’

‘I visit among the poor of those places sometimes, by the kind permission of Father Ely.’

It was the Doctor’s turn to evince surprise now. Father Ely ! What, Ambrose Ely ?

‘Then you know him ?’

‘I met him some years ago on the Continent, and spent a pleasant week in his company. Have

you, Miss Cumberland, long had the pleasure of his acquaintance ?

‘No ; I have only been a Catholic some eight months. Father Ely received me into the Church ; you “old Catholics” are greatly to be envied !’

‘You are mistaken ; I am what you would call a Protestant. Little Vi knows what a terrible heretic I am !’

‘I wish you were much more of a terrible heretic, Doctor,’ rejoined Vi ; ‘then we might get you into the Church. But your views are *too* broad to do anything with you.’

‘Well, you know what Byron says :

“Come and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature’s realms of worship, Earth and Air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer.”

Such are my feelings ; but pray excuse me.’

‘You need make no apologies, for I am passionately fond of poetry !’

Here the conversation took a general turn, Mrs. Cummings having observed that ‘she always did like people as liked poetry, as showed a great flow of animal spirits, and a good ‘art !’

Dinner was over. They were all seated in the drawing-room. Effie was at the piano, Neville doing the amiable and turning over the leaves. The Doctor was talking in a very easy, unrestrained manner with Miss Cumberland and Vi.

‘So you came across my old friend the commis-

sionaire. He is a grand old soldierly man, is he not? But I suppose you did not see his little nurse?

A shadow like the instant flitting of an intense pain flashed across the Doctor's face as he answered:

'Yes, I had that pleasure!'

'Indeed, you may well call it a pleasure; for she is, without exception, the most charming child I ever met—truly one of Nature's gentle children, who might grace and ornament any station in life. I think he will be happy, poor man or peer, who shall be blessed with her help and assistance through life. Little Lizzie Mount impressed me most favourably from the very first time I saw her. There is something in her look and bearing which it is impossible to forget—something in her quiet, almost sad, face which is so touching, that, once seen, it becomes ever a pleasing remembrance.'

The Doctor sat listening to May's words like a man in a dream; and when her voice ceased, he turned his eyes towards hers, and said, in an earnest and almost impassioned way:

'I could not have expressed my own feelings better than you have expressed them. Nothing will delight me more than to know more of that child—nothing please me better than to be enabled in some way to help and assist her, to lighten her hard lot; for the sick man's words are still ringing in my ears. "Little Lizzie has at times," he said, "to rough the storm: the lot of the fatherless

poor is a very hard one !” Tell me something more of this child ; for, believe me, I am more interested than you can imagine.’

‘I know but little more of her than that she is a very punctual, neat, clever, and retiring child, most devoted in her attachments. Thoughtful beyond her years, she is very gentle, yet most firm in carrying out any little plan. She is a great favourite with all the children in the school in which she teaches, and, in fact, with all who know her. Her mother is a poor widow, a needle-woman, delicate in health ; but of a quiet nature, sober and honest, and not at all like in features or figure to her daughter. The mother and child are passionately fond of each other. Lizzie’s constant companion is a sunny mirthful girl about a year or so older than herself, called Minnie Redmond. She and Lizzie are two of the pupil-teachers in Father Ely’s school.’

‘We must strive to do what we can for these children, Miss Cumberland. I doubt not but that our friend Father Ely will assist us with his good advice. It is little I can do, but that little shall be done cheerfully.’

‘Who can tell,’ exclaimed May with enthusiasm, ‘but that a bright and happy future may await that sad-faced child ; that we may let in sunshine upon a clouded life !’

‘God grant it, Miss Cumberland. But every bright future must have cloudy and rainy days.

“‘Into each life some rain must fall
Some days must be sad and dreary !’”

‘Come, come,’ here broke in Effie Byrne ; ‘you three seem terribly earnest in your private talk over there. Come, let us have a round game at cards, for I’m tired of singing and playing, with such an audience, and no one to help me. It’s still raining hard outside, so let us make heyday while the gas shines.’

And the hours passed, passed most pleasantly. The time for departure at length came, and to some of the company it came *much too soon*. The Captain and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Cummings took their leave. George and his friend wished their host, hostess and daughters, and their fair visitor good-night, and dashed through the rain once more in the direction of Bower Street.

‘May,’ said Effie, as the sisters kissed their friend after showing her to her room, for they had prevailed upon her not to venture home in the storm ; ‘May, I think Vi and I ought to be very jealous, for you monopolised the whole of the Doctor’s time and attention this evening.’

May and her two friends laughed and parted for the night ; but as May Cumberland knelt down to pray that night, there was one continual distraction in her prayers—a gentleman with a sad face and white hair. She asked herself, as she shook her fair hair on her pillow, ‘Why should I think of him ?’ Perhaps, May Cumberland, he is the first man that has ever rightly touched those chords in

your affectionate heart ! Sleep on, though clouds flit across you in your dream, and the pale-faced child and the white-haired Doctor gaze strangely through the thickening gloom ! Sleep on, and sleep in peace ; but beware ! the rocks are very slippery on that shore. The tide rises *very* rapidly, and the storm breaks suddenly. Beware, or the waters will speedily cover thee ; beware, or the storm will overwhelm thee ! beware in time, May Cumberland !

CHAPTER III.

25 GREAT BURLEY STREET.

GREAT BURLEY STREET, as everyone knows, runs into Burley Square. The houses in this street are of different dimensions, and form portion of the great Duke of Mudford's estate. Formerly this was the abode of the 'upper ten,' or at least some portion thereof. Times have altered ; fashion has gone westward. At 25 Great Burley Street, dwelt Miss May Cumberland.

The house was but moderately-sized, and well and almost elegantly furnished. Miss Cumberland was her own mistress ; an orphan, and what people generally call an heiress. A good substantial fortune, well invested in Government securities, placed her in most comfortable circumstances. She has already informed us that at the eventful time

of this history she had been eight months a convert. Since her parents' death, which happened when she was about seventeen, she had lived with an old and venerated servant of the family, whom she treated more as a mother than as one of her dependents. This good old lady had faithfully served Mr. and Mrs. Cumberland from their early married days till their death. She had tended both in their last sickness, and May was to be 'her all' on earth. For the sake of that only child of her former master and mistress she sacrificed all ideas of seeking a home for herself, and resolved to remain faithful to her till such time as she should see her settled in life.

Harriet Kemp, or 'Harry,' as May always called her, was known to the outer world as Mrs. Kemp. There had never been a Mr. K., but 'Harry' had passed into that period of existence when women of her sphere of life drop the Miss for the Mrs., as more maternal and more becoming the position they hold in domestic circles. There was nothing old-maidish about 'Harry;' motherly, kind and genial, she was a true type—now, alas too rare—of the old English servant who has thoroughly grown up to be indeed one of the family. It is needless to say that Miss May was her idol, and that she was willing to sacrifice anything she had at the shrine of that little goddess whom she had so faithfully served. Her whole religion seemed to be 'fidelity' to her young mistress. Her education was not great, but

long familiarity with good manners and good society had refined and educated her. May loved her as a faithful friend, and in all things had learnt to lean upon her superior knowledge for advice, in all things but in the matter of religion. In this she could not consult her, for 'Harry's' religion was merely, at best, 'the religion of the heart ;' pious sentiment, and the great British idea of 'being respectable and honest.'

When May, after her twenty-first birthday, had submitted to the Church and joined the religion of her forefathers, the good old soul was highly shocked, because May had thrown her lot in with that portion of the British nation which did not stand high in society.

'And you know, darling,' she observed, 'that Catholics are the poorest of the poor, and they have so many of the lower orders amongst them ; it isn't at all respectable.'

But then she consoled herself that May was her own mistress, and had received a good education, and was old and sensible enough to judge for herself ; and if she wished to become a Turk or Mahometan, surely she had a right to do so, provided always that she didn't altogether forfeit her respectability ; and after all, the 'Catholics were not so despised as they used to be when she was a girl.' And so she left the matter, and went piously to church or chapel Sunday by Sunday, sitting sometimes under the Rev. Silas Hornblower, at Methusalem Chapel, at other

times listening to that celebrated Low-Church minister, the Rev. Erasmus Rock; and if she knew that Father Ely was going to preach she would run round to the Catholic Church. Somehow or other the Father's sermons had a wonderful attraction for this good woman, and although she seemed as far from embracing the Truth as she was in the days of her girlhood, yet she had made a step—she had got herself within the secret influence of the hidden Presence of the Tabernacle.

'We must pray and let Our Lord do His own work,' said Father Ely.

'I'm too old,' said Mrs. Kemp, 'to change my religion, dear,' when May even remotely hinted at such a thing.

How had May, our gentle reader may ask, come to be a Catholic? It is the old story. We put it down to certain external circumstances, and very often lose sight of the fact that it is solely the grace of God that works conversions.

'O Faith, thou workest miracles
Upon the hearts of men,
Choosing thy home in those same hearts
We know not how or when.'

The gift comes to us through these very outward circumstances which Divine Providence uses as instruments to prepare the soul for the reception of the Faith.

May had ever been a religiously-minded girl, with a godly hatred of sentimentality, and a yearn-

ing for something real and tangible in religion. High-Church Protestantism 'soon won her heart. At boarding-school she had been taught 'Catholic practices.' She had a horror of even the name of a Protestant, and believed firmly that she held the old religion, and called herself an 'English Catholic.' And so things went on. She loved nothing so much as her 'Morning Celebrations,' and the 'Evensong' she never missed when she could help it. It is needless to say that she was a member of 'the Guild of St. Elizabeth,' and a 'frequent communicant.' She sought advice from her 'Father Confessor,' never dreaming that he knew, amiable creature as he was, as much about 'guiding souls' as he did about guiding a war-vessel in the Channel.

Poor May had many a hard conflict before the bright peace of 'home in the true Church' came. She was 'put under obedience,' not to bother about her doubts ; to read no 'Romish books.' She was forbidden to speak to a 'Romish priest, or enter a Romish chapel,' and was even threatened with the unpardonable sin if she ever did so. 'Father' Thurifer, her Anglican guide, ruled her life with a tyrant's rule, and kept her poor soul in bondage. Providence removed him. His Bishop grew weary of his lights, candles, and incense, and gave him another and a better living, and one of his own daughters to boot ! We have learnt on good authority that this reverend gentleman, since his marriage, has dropped the title of 'Father,' and

that, beyond choral celebrations, the ritual and doctrine administered to his new flock is only 'moderately high.'

This was a sad trial to May. Beyond the fact of her Father Confessor, who was always so strong on the subject of the celibacy of the clergy, being now a married man, she had other things which greatly shocked her.

'Father' Thurifer's place was taken by the afore-said Rev. Erasmus Rock. No one ever accused him of 'Romanising tendencies.' In one week he reformed matters according to the notion of a Protestant Reformer. Away went altar, candlesticks, vestments, flowers, choristers, and guilds; all, as 'filthy rags of Romanism,' he scattered to the four winds of heaven.

'And this,' thought May, 'is a priest of the English Church, sent here to guide us, under the same Bishop, and belonging to the same Church as Father Thurifer. Can *this* English Church, after all, be part of the one true Church? Is it *the* true Church? If so, why are not all its members *one* in Faith?'

This had never before troubled her to the extent that it did now that she had practical experience of it. She had, it is true, 'doubts' about these things in times gone by, but somehow they were more easily silenced then than now. All this Evangelical doctrine was to her most revolting, and so she left the Church where she had been so happy, at least at times.

For a time she sought out other High Ritualistic churches at a distance. But the old question would keep asking itself, 'Why go so far? Is not Mr. Rock as much a priest as these other reverend gentlemen? Is not he as much a minister of the English Catholic Church?' She was perfectly miserable.

In an agony of despair she went into a Catholic church. It was Father Ely's, and that good man was giving a little instruction on 'A happy death of a child of the true Church.' 'What harm,' thought May, 'can there be in speaking to this man? He is as much a Priest as 'Father' Thurifer, even according to our Anglican teaching.'

She mustered up courage and entered the Confessional. She had intended merely to confess, and say nothing about being an 'English' Catholic. She had heard of others going to 'Romish' Priests when there was no opportunity of going to their own. But she broke down miserably. She opened her heart to the good Priest, and *never again* entered a Protestant church, Broad, High, or Low!

Oh, how happy she felt! On her twenty-first birthday she was rich indeed, for on that day the whole of the treasures of the Church were hers by right and title of the one true Faith. What joy, peace, and happiness! No more doubt, or uncertainty. She could not understand why all the world was not Catholic; she only wondered why

she had not seen and embraced the Truth before. She was now at rest. All the energy of a bright, pure, and single-hearted nature she devoted to the service of the one, pure, holy, and true religion.

Little Violet Byrne was sitting with May Cumberland in the cosy little room which she used as a sitting-room. The drawing-room was only used on state occasions, when any special persons had to be entertained. The little sanctum where the two friends sat was the favourite room of May. It was, as it were, the temple of her little household treasures. Two rooms in that wonderful No. 25 were quite sacred—that sitting-room, and the chamber where the fair head rested at night. Even the good old Mrs. Kemp trod within their wondrous precincts with a lighter and more reverential tread. Had she seen the prints of the little feet there, we are inclined to think she would, perhaps not have stooped and kissed them, but she would have hesitated to place her unworthy foot thereon, and would have passed them as something to be highly venerated.

It is needless, perhaps, to mention that our two friends had first met at St. Wilfrid's, Father Ely's church, and that the good Father in question was the means of their knowing each other so well. Little Vi being May's first Catholic friend, and there existing a common bond of union between them, the love for and well-being of the poor Mission of St. Wilfrid's, we can well imagine the principal

subject of conversation between them when they could give free vent to the fulness of their hearts. Those two human hearts were both free from the corroding mixture of pride and worldliness, and out of their abundance came forth honest simplicity. Perhaps if they had lived in the days of fairy god-mothers, they might both have inherited the gift of 'the pearls and diamonds.'

'I have been thinking,' said May, 'how much I should like to do something for poor Lizzie Mount, and have been sounding Mrs. Kemp on the subject. The dear old soul doesn't see things from my point of view, and she even objects to my seeing her here in my little sanctum. Then again, Lizzie's mother is so jealous of any attention paid to the child, that one is in quite a dilemma.'

'Why not speak to Father Ely on the subject?' suggested her friend.

'I have done so, and it's ever the same answer, "Wait, my child; all will come right in God's good time." But,' added May, 'at times it's so hard to wait. One doesn't know what may happen; and putting off these things does so look like losing opportunities.'

'Our good Father surely knows best,' counselled Vi; 'and we can't be far out if we take his advice.'

'Father Ely starts for his three weeks' holiday on Monday, and promised me he would speak more about the subject on his return. And that reminds me, Vi—couldn't we both of us run out of town for

a week or so while our Director is absent ? for, you know, the Sunday Confraternity meetings are suspended during his absence.'

And the brains of those two little women were set to work actively developing plans for a few days' recreation, and a few little surprises for their good Father Director, in the way of material assistance for his missionary work on his return.

This world in which we live is a big place, after all ; for even the little world of our associations is too big for our ever restless and most active minds, let them be ever so zealous in their explorations.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER ELY.

IF the comfort of a snug and well-furnished room be the indication of a want of mortification, all we can say is that Father Ambrose Ely was by no means a mortified man. Entering his room at times, you might find his Reverence seated in a moderately comfortable easy-chair saying his Office, or reading his paper or some book, spiritual, religious, historical, or otherwise. Actually a fire was in the grate, and it blazed away most cheerfully. The room was comfortably furnished, and a somewhat worn, but warm, carpet covered the floor. A long, well-packed bookcase filled up one side, and

religious pictures adorned the other walls. There was a *prie-dieu*, and a little Altarina with its Crucifix and Madonna, and a little table hard by covered with curiosities. Several semi-official pieces of furniture graced the room, the centre of which was occupied by a large library writing-desk. The room was thoroughly a priest's room—office, study, and sitting-room combined—and comfortable withal.

We don't think we shall shock our gentle readers if we reveal a little secret. This good Priest had commenced his missionary career with bare boards, a chair and a table, his many volumes piled up around his room. He hadn't even a fender to his fireplace, or a poker to poke his fire; but that mattered little, for even in the depth of winter he had no fire to poke. But, somehow or other, he found all this didn't pay. His constitution was not over-strong, and it cost him more in doctor's fees than it would have done for coals and little comforts. Added to this, he had to endure the misfortune of several weeks' rest after a long struggle against cold and discomfort.

He eventually discovered that a comfortless room did not help him to do God's work, and so he accepted gratefully the votive offerings of his friends and children. He furnished his room, and made his home-life a little more enjoyable. Poor man, he needed a little recreation. He loved his room, and his books were his old and tried friends. He could scarcely ever be persuaded to accept an

invitation to spend an afternoon or an evening out of the Presbytery. He was not a diner-out. He felt that the Presbytery should be his home, and he saw that to make it attractive was to keep himself at home in the midst of his flock. He had plenty of mortifications in his daily life. His nature was such as called upon him to make great sacrifices, being a man of large heart, kind affections, and strong sympathies. His flock called him 'our good Father.' They all loved him with reverential love, and the little ones simply worshipped him. To them he was as 'God's angel on earth.' Even the boys—and we all know that the boy is not a religious animal—seemed quite civilised by his very presence. They were more gentle and reverential, less unloving and cruel, each time they felt the influence of his personal care. He was a man in the prime and vigour of life.

We are not introducing to the reader what most people would consider a saint. It is not our infallible office to canonise. Father Ely was a good man, and genial as all good men are. Though he did not disdain to let himself be a little looked after, he was nevertheless ever most willing to sacrifice the greatest, as well as the least, comfort in order to help spiritually and materially all who were entrusted to his pastoral care. He really loved them, and lived for them ; some dozen years had convinced them of this. In return they loved him and obeyed him.

In personal appearance Father Ely was neither a monster of ugliness nor a paragon of beauty. He was dark and tall ; his face was kind but pale. It was difficult for him to hide his emotions ; his face, being that of a single-minded man, was a sure index of the feelings of his heart.

On the Sunday afternoon after the social gathering in Marley Street, Father Ely was busy, for a short space, superintending the packing of his portmanteau by his good housekeeper, Margaret.

‘Are you quite sure, child, you’ve packed up everything I shall want ? I shall be away three weeks.’

‘Yes, Father ; I’ve put up all the new things, so as you may go away decent and comfortable.’

‘I shall put you under obedience some day, Margaret,’ rejoined Father Ely, ‘to tell me where all my new clothes come from. I think somebody must have Aladdin’s lamp.’

The good Father little thought that more than half of Margaret’s scanty wages were returned to him in many of those ‘new things, which some one who wasn’t to be mentioned had left.’ He was sorely puzzled to know how all his little wants were so wonderfully supplied, since he knew Margaret to be a woman of great reserve and discretion.

‘Where’s Katie ?’ asked Father Ely.

‘Oh, she’s gone round to have tea with Lizzie Mount ; it’s Lizzie’s birthday to-day.’

‘Dear, dear me !’ said the Priest, quite distressed ;

‘what a stupid old head mine is ! I quite forgot it. Never mind, I shall see her this evening at service. Thank you, dear child, for reminding me.’

With that he went to his bookshelves, and taking down a book, wrote something in it, and left it on his desk.

As a rule Margaret didn’t like ‘them there girls,’ but Lizzie was an exception. She even condescended to let Katie ‘have her in to tea’ occasionally. She knew Lizzie was a favourite with the good Father ; but, gentle reader, it is a fact, Margaret the woman, Margaret the Priest’s housekeeper, was *not* jealous. The truth is that Margaret was a practical, good woman ; and although she had a woman’s horror of girls in general, she knew how to discriminate.

Why bore you, kind reader, with further particulars ? It was Sunday when all this packing and preparation went on, and Monday evening found his Reverence some 300 miles away from the great city, among old friends in the ‘canny North.’

Father Ely had once more sought a little rest and quietude among scenes familiar to him for many a year. After the toil and worry of anxious work in the courts and alleys of the modern Babylon, the waving cornfields and the ever-moving freshness of the sea brought new health and fresh vigour to his mind and body. Brentburn was a sweet spot—a little village buried in a wood—not far from the great, noisy and smoke-clouded town of Severland, and its pretty little seaside hamlet of Holyrock.

The village straggled down out of the wood to the shore of the sea, where it ended in a long row of fishermen's cottages and a life-boat station. The good Priest walked into the smoky town each morning to say his Mass, and after a little breakfast with the Pastor of that flourishing Mission, he retraced his steps or slowly wandered along the seashore. There he loved to be alone, and would wander on for miles ; or, if the day were bright, choose some sequestered spot wherein to say his Office, or read, or meditate, or build up projects for the future carrying on of that work among his people which was so dear to him. In the restless murmur of the sad sea-waves he heard the voice of Nature speaking great truths to his soul. That secret-hiding sea told him of his own nothingness ; reminded him how soon all frail flesh would pass, whilst itself, a creature of the same Creator, would last in unchanging grandeur till the end of time. He felt the lesson so hard for human hearts to learn. At other times he would people that vast solitude wherein he found himself with all who had passed away, and all who were still most dear to him ; of past, present and future he would make a grand living picture, and live in this ideal world of his own fancy. These day-dreams of the happiness of human hearts were the romances which he read in the hollow murmurs of the sea. That secret deep, with its unseen caves and hidden treasures, preached to him of unchanged fidelity to all who sought his poor paternal care.

He saw in it the mirror of a grand unchanging heart ; even the very bitterness of its waters spoke to him of the sadness and grief which must at times fill a faithful heart—a heart the same in calm and peace, in commotion or in storm.

In the second week of his vacation Father Ely was invited to Sprigsby Hall. The Sprigsbys were old friends of the family with whom he was staying, and out of deference to them Father Ely was invited. He would rather have been left out, but, like the good-natured man that he was, he went ; and his agreeable ways and cheerful nature won for him golden opinions at the Hall. Those who had never spoken to a Priest before in their lives declared that ‘he wasn’t at all like a Priest ;’ and we suppose he wasn’t at all like their bigoted notions of one. Some concluded he was a Jesuit in disguise, while others protested that he was far too enlightened, and ‘much too much of a gentleman’ to remain in ‘the errors of Popery.’ One alone of that cheerful company insulted him, and was rude to him. She was an honourable lady—the Honourable Laura Mapleson. A woman of forty summers, she assumed the airs of budding womanhood. Red hair and a florid complexion helped to carry out the delusion she practised as to her age. Her features would have been pleasing, but for the continuous habit of saying sharp things and uttering stinging words through her almost closed teeth, and the sarcastic curl of the upper lip which gave her for the time a

wild and cat-like appearance. Directly their eyes met, Father Ely and the Honourable Laura seemed to understand each other. In the good single-minded Priest the plotting woman of the world beheld an object of fear, and consequently of hatred. In her that Priest saw a nature capable of great good, warped and vitiated by an unruly heart, which he could at best but pity. A strange feeling crept over him as she spoke, and her bitter sarcasm and insulting expressions of prejudice in reference to the Catholic Priesthood made him inwardly thank God that such a woman had never before crossed his path. He never forgot that first meeting. Those first impressions he had cause to remember in after-life.

The last week of a pleasant holiday was drawing to a close. A bundle of letters awaited Father Ely on his return from his morning walk. One was in the handwriting of the assistant Priest whom he had left in charge of his Mission. It was the first to receive his attention. A sad look as of intense pain darted across his face, and he said quite audibly, 'May she rest in peace! Poor Lizzie, poor child!

CHAPTER V.

LIZZIE'S NEW HOME.

THE news that Father Ely had received was that of the sudden death of Mrs. Mount. Although she was conscious when George Spence and the Priest arrived she could not speak, and in a very brief space the end came. It was well for Lizzie that Miss Cumberland had returned to town. That kind-hearted friend was with the poor child without delay. George was commissioned to see after the funeral arrangements. Nothing could induce Lizzie to leave the abode where the dear dead reposed. The good Priest, for whose presence she yearned, and whose kind words she knew would bring much comfort to her sad little heart, was with her on the day of desolation—the parting from the lifeless form of the one she held so dear in life, and loved so faithfully. May and Minnie Redmond were with her at the grave, where for the sake of his favourite little child Father Ely performed the last sad rites.

They did not return to the poor dwelling in that little street with a churchyard barring the thoroughfare, but they went direct to 25 Great Burley Street. Here a great surprise awaited the pale-faced child. May took her to a little room, cheerfully but plainly furnished. During the few short hours that they had been absent all Lizzie's little treasures had been

transported to that room, and there they were spread out before her. Her prizes, her favourite pictures, her tiny crucifix, her little altar with the sweet-faced Madonna that Father Ely had given her, her books—all were there. It was thoughtful indeed to give her new abode so much resemblance to the dear old home, while yet there were so many things which made it different. One glance around, one look into May's face, and Lizzie understood all. She could not speak ; she fell on the neck of the rich young heiress, and gave full vent to her feelings in a burst of tears. She sobbed as though she would break her heart. Her pent-up sorrow had found an outlet, and the kind tears which fell in sympathy with her own soothed her more than any other human consolation.

‘And this,’ said May, after a time, ‘this, Lizzie dear, is your room ; you are to come and live with me, and be my little sister.’

And still the child could not answer. She could find no words to tell all she felt.

She was not an ambitious child. It was not wholly a feeling of joy which filled her heart. Gratitude was there, great and deep, but sorrow too. She was the child of poverty. The poor room in a poor street, the white-washed walls of the school and the dear old church, that was her life, these were her home. She wanted to ask many questions, but she could not then. Her old companions, might she still see them ? the loved work

in the school, would all yet remain hers ? She must wait and see. A great conflict raged in that little heart, but she did not ask a single question. She would hope, she would wait and see. She would show her gratitude in works, in words she could not. One firm resolve she made, and buried it deep down in her heart ; and amidst her tears she simply said, 'Dear lady, I will try to show you by my life how grateful I am for all your kindness.'

When the world, or at least some little portion thereof, heard what May Cumberland had done, it was dreadfully shocked. 'No good will come either to that poor girl or to her patroness,' it prophesied. Mrs. Kemp shook her knowing old head, and said 'she didn't like this kind of thing, but supposed her good mistress knew best ; she was always afraid she would do some such thing. It was not respectable, and people would be sure to talk so.' Dear old Mrs. Kemp's sentiments were those of many a kind heart, that thinks it knows human nature so well, but makes wondrous mistakes in its worldly-wise philosophy. Father Ely, who had assented to May Cumberland's project, had put many restrictions on her resolve ; and that kind-hearted young lady was not allowed to have the entire adjustment of the new fortunes of Lizzie Mount.

May and Lizzie were seated in 'May's room,' as the little sanctum was called, in the evening of the day following the funeral of Mrs. Mount. Lizzie

had been at the Clergy-House and had had a long view with Father Ely.

‘And so,’ said May, ‘it is arranged that for the present you are to continue your work at the school. That I am glad to hear. Please God, we shall be so happy together ! Now, Lizzie dear, I want to say something to you, and want you to make me a little promise.’

Lizzie was not a demonstrative child, but her heart was full. She laid aside the work she had in hand, and, coming to the side of May, knelt down and took her hands in hers. The bright eyes of the poor child gleamed with an even brighter light than was their usual wont, and a look of happiness beamed on the pale upturned face as she said :

‘Dear lady, I will promise you anything ; for I know and feel you will never ask me to do anything that is not right and good.’

May kissed the child, and holding her near to her said :

‘Lizzie dear, you must never again call me “lady,” or any other name but “sister,” or “May ;” that is the first thing you must promise me.’

‘Sister dear, I do,’ said the child, as the big tears came into her eyes.

‘And secondly, promise me that you will always trust me, and tell me all that you may rightly tell me. Whatever you want for yourself or others, you will always let me know. You will always treat me as a sister, and be a sister to me.’

‘Sister dear, I will.’ The truthful glance of the child declared how that promise was from the heart.

We cannot say which of the two was the happier—the poor girl who had found a friend, or rather a sister, or that rich fair lady who, for the first time in life, felt that she had an object for which to live.

Her new position did not turn the poor child’s head. Her dresses were of the plainest; nor would she even consent that the sober garb of black should be trimmed or made differently from the ordinary mourning of the children of the poor. May did not press the point. The only alteration in the child’s outward appearance was that the garments were no longer patched, but new. Outwardly there was little difference. May was indeed a sister to her. The child felt that it was not simply a patronage, and May’s home became her home. As often as was consistent with her new life she would be with her old companion, Minnie Redmond; to have her at her new home, and let her share with her the new-found fortune, was to Lizzie one of her greatest joys. She became more devoted to the school-duties; and, if possible, more gentle to the little ones over whom she was placed. Her spare moments she devoted to her old friend, the commissioner, who by this time had quite recovered. She never failed to visit him in his humble little dwelling daily. Many little comforts of life and assistances to his aged frame found their way to his little room nowadays. Lizzie was like a good

angel who brought him happy glimpses of a better world. He took a greater pride in 'his little pet,' as he called her, than he had ever taken before. He was indeed proud of her, and he would hurry home not to miss the sight of his little 'grand-child,' as she made him call her. He would walk up and down a quiet street on the great Mudford Estate where he could get a glimpse of that wonderful 25, and he would pray earnestly for her welfare, and that of the kind lady with whom she lived. Often he would say to himself,—'thank God, her new home, and her good fortune, have not changed her.'

Old Bolton put a wonderful trust in that child. Too blunt and generous-hearted to be jealous, his kind nature did but warm towards those who were good to his 'darling little pale-face.' Her benefactors were his benefactors, and he would have done all in his power to show his gratitude for their goodness. May Cumberland therefore became at once, in this old soldier's mind, a greater heroine than any history could produce and for that 'ladye fair,' he was ready, if need be, 'to do battle and to bleed.' Perhaps some day he might be able to show his gratitude, at least he hoped so.

There was a constant visitor at Lizzie's new home. Sometimes he would only leave his card with a hope that Miss Cumberland and Miss Mount were well, at other times the servant would announce that Dr. Spence was in the drawing-room and would be glad to see either or both of the young

ladies, if they could spare the time. Of course they always did manage to spare the time.

All this time Mrs. Kemp was neither forgotten or in any way neglected. Lizzie soon won her heart and best wishes. The servant at No. 25, who happened to be an 'old girl' of Lizzie's school, once ventured to make a remark which Mrs. Kemp did not consider quite respectful. At once that worthy woman informed the domestic in question that 'she would have none of those airs in that house.' So the matter dropped ; the said domestic ever afterwards spoke in the most respectful terms of Miss Mount. A woman, young or old, who knows and keeps her position in society, is one of the greatest treasures in God's creation, even though that woman be your poor and unpretending washerwoman.

CHAPTER VI.

A STERN RESOLVE.

WE must return to our hero, or our attempt at a story may be likened by our readers to the far-famed performance of 'Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark left out.'

George Spence had enjoyed for some time the happy solitude of his apartments in Bower Street. A few days after the night on which George had

made the acquaintance of Miss Cumberland, that fascinating young gentleman, Willie Nelson, had been despatched to India on an important commission by the firm of merchants under whom he held a good, and at the same time, responsible situation. George had been by no means a loser by the absence of his young friend, although he felt that absence at first keenly. Willie had very taking ways with him, and it was impossible to live with him without falling under his influence. George cared little for the amusements and gaieties of the world, but he had mingled in them to satisfy the tastes of his companion. Being a large-hearted man, and a sincere friend, he had always a kind view for the doings of those for whom he cared much. He made a thousand excuses for any seemingly grave fault. To Willie he had often spoken in a quiet way, warning him against the 'love of pleasure and society,' which seemed rapidly taking possession of him. His young friend used to laugh, and promise that when he got older he would settle down. Of course George's purse was always open ; the greater share of all expenses fell to his lot to bear. It was well for the Doctor that he had a good income of his own.

That George had been a great traveller was evident from his very conversation. There were few parts of the globe to which he had not been. For more than a dozen years he had scarcely settled anywhere. America, Australia, India, and the

Colonies had in turn been the brief resting-place of the white-haired Doctor. Sometimes he would accept a post in his medical capacity on board some great steamer trading to foreign parts or far distant lands. For a short time he had seen service in the Navy. He had volunteered his services in time of war, and tended the wounded in the battle-field, or the sick in the hospitals; but he had never settled to anything during these past years. Restless and uneasy, he gave his mind strenuously to some project for a while, then suddenly left it and wandered far from the scene of his labours. Few had ever gained his confidence or affection so deeply as Willie Nelson, but even to this young man the doctor was an unsolved mystery.

George had learnt to trust humanity only to a certain extent, yet he never permitted himself to mistrust it wholly. He believed every man to be honest till he found him out to be the contrary; and even when one man did turn out a rogue, he did not therefore lose belief in the whole race. He had learnt to keep his own counsels, and looked upon the babbler of his secret thoughts as a fool, unworthy of pity. Let it not for a moment be supposed that there were not times in his life when he would have given worlds for counsel and advice, but to have sought it would have been to tell the history of his life, and he had not yet found one to whom he could so far unburden himself. There are thousands in the world—we pass them in our

daily journeying, to and fro, in life—who are yearning to tell the secret sorrow of their existence. There are none to listen, who can bring aid. Poor weary souls ; they never heard of, or they do not believe in, the healing consolation of the Confessional, the wondrous strength of the great comforting Sacrament of Penance, in the Catholic Church.

With all his natural goodness, George Spence had strange, vague, rationalistic views on religion. His parents belonged to the old school of Bible-Christian Low Church people. Mrs. Spence was a severe Puritanical lady. George, as a boy, simply hated the Sunday. It was to him a hard, cold, joyless day. He was doomed to quietude and piety which were terrible ; and the thought of that one day cast a gloom over the whole week. Three times each Sunday he had to listen to the droning monotone of a lifeless service in a stuffy church. Collects and texts had to be learnt, and weary chapters listened to out of that wondrous Book of God's Word, which was wrested from being a comfort to his soul, and only became its torture.

George Spence was not the only man whom the gloomy servitude of the remnants of God's truth has forced into an almost hatred of religion. The Bible which his mother gave him, when a boy, he kept for her sake, but it was carefully locked away, for the sight of it only made him feel bitter against those who had made his young days a pain.

From the time that he had left his parents' roof he had never, at least for the purpose of prayer, entered a church. Curiosity, or his passionate love for music, had at times led him to visit cathedral or church ; beyond this he went not.

His profession was to him his great source of consolation. He was fond of reading ; he had studied hard, and was clever withal. Religious works he studiously avoided. Poetry, especially the wild school of Shelley and Byron, had a great attraction for him. George Spence was not an atheist, but he could scarcely be called a Christian. He believed in God, but his knowledge of the various modern sects had almost driven him into disbelief in Christianity. Of the Catholic religion he knew nothing. To him the external worship of the great Christian Church was indeed poetically grand, and its functions imposing ; but beyond this his prejudice saw only a kind of superstition. His early training had never been forgotten, and religion had never been made attractive for him. The Catholic Church had always been misrepresented to him from his earliest childhood, and these impressions were not obliterated, but strengthened, by the books and journals he daily perused. His early dislike to the religious training to which he had been subjected, and his subsequent discovery of the differences and disagreements of the various phases of so-called Christianity, made him very distrustful of all definite religious teaching. He had become quite a Rationalist.

George Spence had met many excellent Catholics in his travels, and many zealous priests, but he had admired them simply as men, good and earnest ; the idea of religion reforming and ennobling their characters had never entered his head. Willie Nelson was a Catholic, but George doubted whether his young friend had ever been inside a church since his mother's death. Willie had been educated at a Protestant school ; his father was a Protestant, and, as so often happens in mixed marriages, he was but a Catholic in name and by baptism.

Many a pleasant evening George would spend with May and Lizzie in Great Burley Street. As time went on, No. 25 had greater attractions for the white-haired Doctor. He did not perceive it himself, but his visits became more frequent, and he would stay more than a short half-hour. Sometimes he met Father Ely there, but it was not often, as the good Father seldom stayed long in the houses of his flock, unless called in on duty or to tend the sick. Violet Byrne was a frequent visitor, as we have seen.

Weeks and months had passed away since Lizzie had taken up her abode in her new home. Our Lady's bright month had come a second time with its sweet sunshine and flowers. Lizzie had gone straight to the church, and, after a little prayer, had assisted May in decorating Our Lady's little shrine. Then the two friends knelt down in prayer together, and left the church.

Lizzie had grown somewhat, and the hard lines of poverty had been toned down in her features. The face was still pale, but it looked calmer and happier than of old. May was the same bright sunny creature as ever. Both those young hearts were full of happiness that beautiful spring afternoon. It was so delightful in the quiet squares that they walked together for some time, talking of the past, and dreaming day-dreams of the future.

‘And can you remember nothing very far back about your father or any of your mother’s relatives?’ asked May.

‘No,’ said her companion; ‘for, you know, father died when I was quite a small thing. I never remember anyone coming to see mother except a strange woman in black, who always wore her veil over her face. She used to come at times. Mother would call me when she came and send me out of the room. I never saw that woman’s face. I think she used to bring my mother money, because after she had gone we used to have better food and get new clothes.’

‘Perhaps she was some kind of visiting lady,’ suggested May.

‘I don’t know,’ replied Lizzie; ‘but I used often to wonder who she was. She only came two or three times a year. I remember about eight years ago she came, and I went out as usual; but coming in I heard her and my mother quarrelling, or using rather high-toned words. I remember her saying,

“Well, if you won’t, there’s an end of it;” and then she went away.’

‘Did you ever see her again?’

‘No, never. I don’t think she came after that. We moved then from where we were living, and came and lived in Father Ely’s Mission. I was only a little thing when this happened, but I never forgot it. If I had seen her face, I’m sure I should remember it; but I never did, for she always wore a thick black veil.’

They had by this time reached their home. Mrs. Kemp met them at the door.

‘Darlings, how late you are! It’s fully half-an-hour past tea-time; and the Doctor and Miss Vi’let are upstairs.’

The Doctor and Vi remained to tea. It was soon over, and they went up to the drawing-room. Lizzie sat down at the piano and played one of Father Faber’s hymns. The child had a wondrous ear for music; and now that she could practise when she wished, she made much progress.

‘Do you know the words to that sweet tune, Lizzie?’ asked the Doctor. ‘If so, will you sing them?’

The child raised her eyes to his face; and then in the most touching voice, fresh and free from all affectation, she sang the beautiful words of the hymn, ‘Mary, the Flower of God!’ So from the heart did the words come, that they sent a thrill of religious awe through the listener’s heart.

As May Cumberland looked at the Doctor she

saw that, though his eyes were fixed upon the child, and he was listening attentively, there was the old rapt look which she had noticed on the first night she had met him. That voice and look of the child had recalled some past remembrance ; his thoughts were far away. It was not till the last note had ceased, and the child had risen from the piano that he seemed to be conscious of where he was. He thanked her kindly and gently, and in a voice somewhat stirred by emotion he said, ' You make me wish, Lizzie, that I could feel as you do. You almost make me envy you the happy treasure which your faith seems to be to you.'

' Oh ! Dr. Spence,' she answered, fervently, a slight tinge mantling on her pale cheek, ' you can and may feel all the joy that we feel. Oh ! if you would only try and study our holy Religion, you'd be a Catholic, and you'd then be happy,—Oh ! so happy ; wouldn't he, May ?'

' Well, well,' he answered with a sigh, ' we must go our own way. We cannot be otherwise than we are. It will surely be all the same in the end.'

' Don't say that. Oh ! never say that again, dear Mr. Spence,' said the child. ' Nothing is impossible to God. We must go His way, not our own ; it is not all the same in the end. We can't do anything by ourselves ; but God can make us different from what we are. If you would only promise me to ask God daily to teach you His truth.'

' No, my dear little friend, I cannot promise you

to pray ; you must do that for me ; but don't distress yourself,' he added, earnestly, seeing how the child was moved, 'about poor me. I hope it will all be right some day.'

'God grant it,' echoed Lizzie.

'We will not discuss the matter further. It is time I went, or I shall make you late for service at your church.'

With a somewhat sadder manner than usual, George bade our young friends good-night. After a brief visit to the Dispensary he walked slowly and thoughtfully in the direction of the Post Office near the great muddy river. An unaccountable gloom appeared to have settled upon him ; a strange feeling akin to the foreboding of a coming sorrow seemed to have taken possession of him, He tried to shake it off, but it deepened with each new effort that he made to rid himself of it. In this frame of mind he reached the office. He entered and asked if any letters awaited him. One was handed to him. The superscription was familiar. With a hand that almost trembled, he broke the seal, for it was sealed with an old fashioned seal. It was dated from a private hotel in the Western suburbs of London, and ran as follows :

'DEAR GEORGE,

'You will see by the address that I have returned to the old resting place. I know not where to find you, so send this to the Post Office

you mentioned in your last to me. Should you get it before the end of May come at once to see me. I have news for you. Early in June I start for another long continental tour, so come without delay or you may be too late.

‘Your affectionate Cousin.

‘LAURA MAPLESON.’

‘I wish,’ he mused to himself as he walked homewards, ‘I wish I had not received this letter. I must, I suppose, go to-morrow morning. But shall I tell her about my new-found friends?’

For a time he wandered about the streets deep in abstraction, trying to arrive at an answer to his own question. At last his mind was made up, his features brightened, his pace quickened. He had resolved to keep the knowledge of his new-found happiness to himself. He little dreamt how much depended on the resolution he had formed, and how that stern resolve would hereafter affect the lives of those who had grown to be so very dear to him.

CHAPTER VII •

HOPE LODGE.

IN the county of Fernshire, with its undulating valleys, its copse-covered hills and bright streams and rivulets, are many cheerful spots, and of them all Hope Lodge Estate was one of the most pleasing. In extent it was

neither too large nor too small. Hill, vale, wood, pasture, gentle rivulet and placid lake, it held within the magic circle of its boundary lines. The house seemed like some old hermit trying to hide from the glance of men. From the road you caught a glimpse of it now and then as it nestled on the hillside among the fine old trees. In the grounds it was the same: ever and anon it came upon you suddenly as you wended your way through copse and glade, or over the soft green turf of the pasture land, and as suddenly as it appeared was lost to view.

It was of moderate dimensions, well-built, snug and cosy. It boasted of little or no architectural beauty, but was sufficiently picturesque in its plainness not to detract from the beauty of its surroundings. Within doors it was all that could be desired. Drawing-room, dining-room and library were well and comfortably planned. The rest of the building was in keeping; the architect had built for the owner's comfort.

The verandah that ran round the house was literally covered with roses, passion-flowers, jasmine, woodbine and clematis. Beneath this refreshing shade the drawing-room windows opened on to the lawn which gradually sloped with its flower-beds and winding walks to the edge of the wood. From that open window it seemed as though there were no outlet, and the house appeared buried in a forest. It was not so. The

path wound through an arcade of grand old trees, and suddenly the rippling of water caught the ear, and a small lake stretched out before the enraptured vision. Its waters were clear and bright, being fed from natural springs and several streams crossed by rustic bridges. The outlet from the lake was by a rivulet that tumbled its waters over rough stones, forming quite a miniature cascade; it then bounded onward through woodland and pasture in a merry course till it reached a tributary of a great river, and was borne out into the mighty ocean miles and miles away.

This beautiful estate May Cumberland had not long inherited through the death of a distant relative. At first she thought to dispose of it, but various reasons had caused her to retain possession of it as a country residence. It was well that she had done so. Lizzie's health within the last few months had shown signs of giving way under the continual strain of work in the great city, so her young friend had resolved to spend the summer months in the health-restoring precincts of Hope Lodge Estate. It had caused them both not a little struggle to leave that portion of the great Babylon which had so endeared itself to them. As for poor Lizzie it was only out of obedience to Father Ely that she consented for a time to give up her work, in the hope that thereby new life and vigour might be gained for the task so dear to her.

It was a lovely afternoon in the beginning of

August. Lizzie and May were seated under the shade of the flower-laden veranda. The air was astir with the busy hum of insects. Bees were winging their noisy flight and gathering a rich store from the honey-burdened flowers. The gay wings of butterflies gleamed in the bright sunshine. Among the trees beyond the feathered tribe sent up its joyous song, and poured out its grateful life in praise. The scene was one of great beauty and peaceful happiness. Lizzie had grown, and the new life and country air had given a tinge of health to the usually pale face. The ideal beauty which suggested itself in the days gone by was fast becoming reality ; the marks of care and sorrow were gone, and sunny happiness reigned in the once care-worn features. The contrast between the beauty of the two young friends, the fair May and the raven-haired child, was striking as they sat talking of the past.

‘I wonder we have not heard from the Doctor,’ said May, ‘it is now a month since he wrote. I am getting very anxious about him. I can’t imagine what could have been his motive for leaving London so suddenly after we saw him on that May evening when you sang for us.’

‘Yes,’ replied Lizzie, ‘when he called the next day to say good-bye, he said he hoped he should not be long absent, but that urgent business compelled him to leave at once. I thought he was unusually agitated and thoughtful.’

‘His last letter,’ said May, ‘is dated from Sligo, but as he was to leave there the next day there was no possible means of answering it. I do wonder what can have taken him to Ireland. I have never heard him speak of any of his relatives there.’

‘That is not wonderful, for he never speaks about himself. He seems to avoid all mention of the past. A great mystery seems wrapped round his life. Oh, how I wish he were a Catholic! You seem to have a great power with him, May, you must use it for his soul’s sake.’

‘Lizzie dear, you are ever thinking of the soul. I wish I were as good as you are. I really believe you only love me because you have convinced yourself that it will be for our eternal happiness. You seem always to think of hereafter. I wish I could.’

‘Dearest sister,’ said Lizzie, ‘you surely know me too well not to know what a stubborn, wicked little creature I am. I try to be good, and can only succeed by thinking of the end of all things. Father Ely has taught me this, since I was a little child, and it has grown into quite a second nature. I don’t think I could love any one who was bad. It is because the Doctor is naturally such a good man that I like him so thoroughly. I can’t like by halves, May. How I wish, for his own sake, that he were a Catholic!’

‘Ah! Lizzie,’ replied her companion, with a slight sigh, ‘I wish he were not such a mystery.’

He once spoke about letting in a little sunshine on your life ; and it has come, hasn't it, darling ?

'Oh, yes !' said Lizzie, throwing herself on May's neck and kissing her ; 'it has flooded my life. You know *how* I love you, and how happy I am, don't you ? But you don't seem quite happy to-day, May, dearest—what is it ?' Lizzie saw tears in her friend's bright eyes.

'Well, I've been thinking how happy *we* should be if we could only let a little sunshine into another's life—the Doctor's life—for I feel that it is very clouded, darling.'

'We will try—yes, we will try !' said the dark-haired girl, with all the ardour of her nature. 'But,' she added solemnly, 'there is no real sunshine where there is not the true Faith.'

Neither May nor Lizzie realized the full purport and meaning of the words the former had used. May had been living a life, happy, full of sunshine, pure and single-hearted. But it had been a life where the full tide of affection had risen rapidly, and her whole nature had been overwhelmed. Her heart had insensibly given its human affection to one for whom alone now she seemed to live. She had not noticed the growth of this affection. She was not really alive to its existence. It was only since the Doctor's absence in Ireland that she began to feel how much he was mixed up with her life, and how she longed to see him once more.

Into every heart has been infused a power of

affection which seeks some other generous heart with which to share its sympathies, its sorrows, and its joys. Confiding and unselfish, it leads on to that beautiful phase of life we name friendship. But most hearts are not satisfied with this. Friendship is transitory. We do but obey the laws of our nature, and friends are parted, not that they cease to be friends, but because another and more noble affection has possessed the human heart. There is a sentiment in the heart of man which has, alas ! been too much profaned, which is spoken too lightly of, which is not treated as the sacred thing it should be. It is the power of loving which, if true and pure, completes the education of life, and makes man happy on earth—if God has called him to the married state. Providence has thrown in his way one for whom he feels he can live and toil, who will fill up his cup of earthly happiness ; and to cement their affections and join their hearts and lives, the great Creator has ordained a holy Sacrament with its special aids and blessings. It is a high vocation, and would that all would realize its height, which calls the human heart to join its destiny with another, surpassed only by that nobler vocation which calls for the sacrifice of all simply human affection, and places its only love in the sacrificial service of uncreated and eternal Love.

There is another kind of human love which also rises higher than the affection of friendship. It is

paternal love, the crown of life. A full and stainless love when between child and father there is the same equal return as from friend to friend, from wife to husband. There is nothing more reliable or trustworthy than this paternal love. Although less quickly excited and less outwardly demonstrative than other love, a father's love we feel can never fail, and we believe it against the whole world. To the child it appears all-powerful, certain, infallible. Its judgments and decisions are never questioned. Storms, human foes, and even the spirits of evil, can instil no fear, no terror, into the child's heart as it nestles in its father's arms. A mother's fondling love, with all its beauty and sweetness, is not a thing like this; for a father's love is the image of the uncreated love of our Eternal Father in heaven.

While the affection of May was passing from friendship to that of love, Lizzie's heart and mind were daily drawn to the higher and nobler thoughts of living and toiling for God alone. Her human affections were the affection of faithful friendship to her friend, and of an obedient and devoted child to her spiritual father and guide. She had loved her mother with all the energy of her young heart; a father's love she had never known—none save the paternal care of her spiritual guide, Father Ely. In St. Wilfrid's she had sat year after year listening to the words of him who was to her as God's angel on earth. She knew that in him she

had ever a father and a friend. No sorrow, no joy, however small or great, no anxiety, no foreboding, did she ever keep from him. He was indeed the guardian of her conscience. He alone knew the inner life of the poor, pale-faced child ; he alone knew, even better than she knew herself, the dangers of the poor girl suddenly placed by Providence in the ways of wealth and independence. He watched over and guarded her. He feared for her more than she feared for herself—for he saw evils in her path where she could see none. When he seemed silent he was simply leading her to a life to which he felt God was calling her. He had taught her to subdue a heart naturally impetuous, and he was moulding for God's glory a nature of strong impulse, of great antipathies and deep sympathies. Of the aspirations of her future life he bade her speak to no one—not even to May Cumberland.

For Lizzie the company of the Doctor, George Spence, had certain undefined attractions. She felt great confidence in him ; he was a good man and for his kind and gentle nature she loved him. His charity to her poorer companions, his attention to her mother and the old man Bolton and herself she had never forgotten. Hers was a grateful and generous heart. She was pained at his, at times, depressed manner. She felt keenly, with the instinct of a pure heart's penetration, that some secret sorrow was consuming his better nature.

She longed for the lifting of the veil, not out of curiosity, but simply that joy might be brought to a sorrowful heart. Feeling as she did that this joy could never come unless he were in the True Church, daily in hope she prayed and waited. She had seen how the good Doctor had grown into May's affections, and this itself was another reason that drew her to him for May's sake. Is it wonderful then that these little hearts speaking out of their abundance should often find the absent Doctor the subject of their conversation.

Old Bolton was installed at Hope Lodge as a kind of general steward, looking after the male servants, out-building, houses, traps, gardens and park. The old soldier had grown more proud than ever of his Miss Lizzie and Mistress May. Sunday was to him a very happy day, for then he drove them over to the nearest post town—some six miles distant—to Mass. It was the old man's joy to be near these happy maidens. Mrs. Kemp reigned supreme at Hope Lodge, and superintended all the domestic arrangements with a zeal and energy that could not have been surpassed even if the sum and existence of life depended upon them. It was a happy household ; and there were few happier hearts than those who met nightly in the little private chapel near the library in Hope Lodge.

There was one particular spot in the grounds where Lizzie loved to be alone. Winding along by the little lake, and crossing one of the rustic bridges,

was a path that wended upwards and then sloped downwards till it reached the edge of the noisy little stream. It was a secluded spot, nearly surrounded by tall trees which grew on the steep bank. Into this bank had been built a rustic summer house, some few paces from the entrance to which flowed the stream. Between the trees on the opposite bank were glimpses of the beautiful country beyond ; the murmur of the little waterfall, the hum of insects and the song of birds added to the charms of this retreat.

A few mornings after the conversation we have related, Lizzie was seated alone in her favourite spot. A book lay unheeded before her. She was looking at the fair scene beyond, and her fancy was stretching into the unknown future. Suddenly she started, for May was standing by her side with an open letter in her hand. It was from George Spence. He gave a brief account of his journey, which he said had not been as satisfactory as he could have wished, and hoped to be with them soon : his movements were uncertain, and he could not say when he should return.

‘It is still, darling,’ said May, ‘full of mystery ; but it is a great joy to hear that he is well and has not forgotten his little friends at home.’

Lizzie rose. The two friends climbed the bank behind the summer house, strolled through the wood beyond and passing the limits of Hope Lodge Estate walked across the green field to a little copse that

crowned the hill. They were proceeding on their way talking of all their little joys, when suddenly they stopped, and, clutching each other, uttered a suppressed cry. They were standing on the brink of an old disused quarry. Holding on to one of the trees that grew on the edge of that deep abyss, they looked into the dark depth below. A shudder passed over them as Lizzie said :

‘ What a terrible death it would be to fall from this height into that dreadful darkness ! ’

CHAPTER VIII.

PURSUING A PHANTOM.

GEORGE SPENCE'S life was like the life of a haunted man. His journey over the fair earth was the pursuit of a phantom. By day and night a vision haunted him. It continually occupied his thoughts. Go where he might, do what he would, it stood before him. That vision was the face of one in the first freshness and bloom of womanhood. A figure tall but slenderly built ; a face singularly pleasing—so handsome and intelligent that it might well be called beautiful. Its beauty was enhanced by its delicate paleness, the silent witness of a frail and weak constitution. Eyes of piercing brown and deeply fringed ; the forehead high and intellectual, the hair black and bright as a raven's wing. Such was the face that

haunted the white-haired Doctor day and night. Had he ever seen it in the flesh, or was it one of those strange day-dreams which haunt some men through life, and become so real that they can scarcely convince themselves that they do not really exist?

It was the likeness to that face which had so drawn him to the poor pale face in the haunts of poverty on the October day when first we introduced him to our readers. It was this likeness, growing day by day more like, which made that child so dear to him—so very dear that he almost thought the phantom face was there—so very dear that he would fain have forgotten the past, and if possible blotted from his existence the weary years spent in search of that pale face which day by day haunted him like a phantom, night by night stood before him in his dreams.

But it might not be. It beckoned him onwards, and where it pointed he was forced to go.

That face had once been for him a reality. It was now many years since he had looked upon it in the flesh.

He had thought it gone for ever, and had consoled himself that henceforth he would love its growing image in the pale-faced girl, would love it and live for it, would guard it and treasure it as he would have done the one that he had lost. But the vision came again and beckoned him, and he was forced to follow it.

The secret of his life, the history of the past, was known to one, his cousin, the Honourable Laura Mapleson. Why she kept the secret, and held it so closely locked in mystery, she alone could tell.

Three weary months had passed away since George Spence had left London. In all the great cities of Ireland he had lingered. The beauties of a beautiful country in the most pleasant month of the year had no charm or attraction for him. He passed from town to town, and scarcely heeded the beauties of nature. The lines of care and anxiety were marked deeper on his face; he looked tired and careworn. The old restless nervous feeling was strong upon him. During all this time he had been in frequent correspondence with his cousin Laura, who, to aid him for the time, had given up her Continental journey. Letters passed frequently between them.

It is often the fate of a man to fall under the spell of some dreaded influence, which he seems to have no strength to resist. The influence of the Honourable Laura Mapleson had rested like a deep shadow over George's life. Even as a boy he feared the red-haired girl, and felt himself almost powerless in her hands. His fear almost grew into hate; while, on the other hand, she simply idolised him. At an early age she had determined to make him live down his strong aversion. All her energy was given to that one object. If he would not love her, at least he should feel that he was at her

mercy and under her influence. Hers was not a nature to be crushed by defeat.

An only child, with a large fortune, she had offered her hand, her heart, and her wealth to her cousin, but had been rejected and repulsed. She never forgave the insult which she considered had been offered her. No one knew what it cost her to hide her feelings, but she did so, and in so successful a manner that not even George himself could penetrate the mask she assumed. Henceforth she was kinder to him, more gentle, more considerate than ever; rejoicing in his happiness, sympathising in his sorrows. The events of George's life led for a time to estrangement from his father and mother. With a sister's devotion his cousin stood by him and persecuted him with kindness.

An incident happened which placed him entirely at her mercy. What that event was, and how she used her power, the sequel of this history will show. During the long years that had passed she had never again hinted at his becoming her husband, but steadily continued, as it seemed, to devote to him the energies of her life. Although the old antipathy to the woman was there, yet so closely was she bound up with the great secret of his life that, through this one fact alone, she exercised over him a strange, fatal, fascinating influence.

Three months had passed in fruitless search. At length, weary and jaded with wanderings about the poorer localities of the great towns, George

Spence determined to rest for a few days at the Lakes of Killarney previous to his departure for England. He had written to acquaint his cousin of his intention of giving up the search and of returning to the great city. What was his surprise to find her at the hotel on the borders of the beautiful lakes !

At any other time George's nature would have expanded to the influence of the scenes by which he was surrounded ; but now his thoughts depressed him. He had done all in his power to shake off this depression, but the very sight of his cousin Laura brought it all back again. He sought rest, but the wily woman still urged him forward. He promised to accompany her on the following day to Cork.

George little dreamt of the plot that had been laid for him ; little thought that she, whom he trusted so implicitly, was deceiving him. That cruel deception, that terrible lengthening out of his anxiety, was part of an unrelenting woman's revenge. He was blinded, and walked, like a blind man, unconsciously towards the pitfall set for him.

Laura Mapleson had arrived at Killarney the day before George, but she had arrived from Cork. There she had planned the little plot that was to continue his heart-burning search, there she had matured the means of prolonging the pursuit of the phantom which he was following.

She could have spoken one word which would

have brought rest to his weary heart ; she could have told him a story which would have cast its dark cloud over his soul, but out of that darkness would have come floods of light, bringing unimagined joy and happiness. Had she but obeyed the dictates of her better nature, a beautiful life might have been spared, a sad catastrophe averted, the destinies of more than one life altered. The old, old love came up and pleaded with her, but the purer emotions of her heart she stifled. How much depends on the action of the free-will of humanity ! Laura had formed her resolution. George had refused to make her happy ; he was powerless in her hands : she could, and she would, make him miserable !

In a squalid court on the outskirts of Cork lived, in dirt and apparent wretchedness, an old woman, Johanna Brown. Although meanly clad, and filthy in person and attire, report said that the old woman was by no means poor. She was well known in the surrounding neighbourhood, and had a reputation for being able to foretell the future : at all events she made a living by telling people's fortunes. A pack of greasy cards was produced when anyone was weak enough to consult this old crone about his or her future destiny. After the cards had been shuffled and dealt out with much preliminary fuss, this fester of humanity proceeded to dupe those who foolishly trusted to her knowledge of hidden things.

It was to her abode that George and Laura went as evening was closing in. Their presence in the neighbourhood at that hour gave no cause for talk or suspicion. Well-dressed people, especially females, were not a rarity in that quarter. Mrs. Brown had frequently such visitors.

The old woman was seated in her room when George and his cousin arrived. A black cat—proper companion for a witch—leered at them as they entered. The odour of gin and smoke pervaded the dingy apartment. After a few words from Laura Mapleson, she and the Doctor seated themselves, and the old crone began her story.

Some fifteen years ago she had met a lady in Dublin whom she described. As her description was minute even to certain little particulars, and as the person described was simply the living image of the phantom George was pursuing, we shall not repeat the old woman's words. This lady she had met wandering disconsolately by the river-side. Her pale face and anxious features attracted her. She gained the lady's confidence and learnt her story. The lady had fled from a false love, and was wandering from place to place to find employment. For a time the old woman lodged, fed, and sheltered this interesting stranger.

'Six months ago,' continued the old dame, 'I once more met this same lady. A mighty change had come upon her. She was so much older-like, and more happier in her looks, that I wouldn't

have recognised her hadn't she first remembered me. She was going away with some kind folks with whom she lived. It was the kind things that I did for her in the days gone past that she had never forgotten, and knowing me to be a poor, lone creature, she offered me money. But I knew the poor angel had more need of it than myself, and so I wouldn't take it. So she pulled out an old purse she had, and took out of it a ring which she gave me to keep for her sake. It was a ring, she said, as was given her by one which had been false and faithless to her. Perhaps you might like to look at it ?

George took the ring, and he trembled as he examined it. It was a plain band of gold, containing one pearl set in rubies. On the inside was engraved the word 'Bessie.' George recognised his gift to her for whose sake he had braved his parents' anger and his cousin's hatred. It was a circumstantial confirmation of the woman's story. A five-pound note obtained for him possession of that ring. He hastened the beldame on with her story, learnt the date, and the destination of the ship by which the lady had departed, paid the old woman handsomely for her trouble, and rose to depart.

'I would speak to the fair lady, your companion, alone,' croaked the old beldame, as George was going out of the filthy abode.

Laura felt no inclination to remain. But she

saw mischief in the old woman's eyes and in her voice, so she returned, leaving George at the foot of the stairs.

'Perhaps,' said Laura, 'there's something she doesn't like to tell you, George. I'll go back and see.'

The Doctor was too much occupied with his own thoughts to answer, so his cousin returned.

'Hist, lady!' said the wicked old crone; 'I've told *your* lies well, and done *your* bidding to the letter, haven't I?'

'Yes, yes; but you've been well paid; and it has been a very round sum easily earned. What more do you want?' added Laura, her eyes flashing fire.

'Give me another five pounds, or——'

'You exacting old wretch!' interrupted the red-haired lady.

'Yes, yes!' eagerly gasped the old woman, pointing with her lean and dirty finger to the stairs, and speaking under her breath. 'Give me another five pounds, or I'll after the gentleman and expose you. I'll tell him the truth—that *you* gave me the ring, and that *you* invented the whole story I have told him!'

Laura bit her lip. Her face was ashy-pale. She counted out the sovereigns into the withered hand held out for them, and hurried downstairs, where she found George still lost in the whirl of his own thoughts.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENTFUL DAY.

THE month of September had come with a multiplicity of works for Father Ely. One of the most important was the preparation of a large class of children for their First Communion. The Feast of Our Lady's Birthday had been fixed for this happy event. It was always the good Father's plan to make this one great day a day to be remembered in after life by the little ones; and consequently all was done with as great solemnity as possible. A little simple retreat had preceded the Feast, and the elected children had gathered day by day round Our Lady's Altar and listened earnestly to the heart-warm words which came from their devoted Pastor. Lizzie had returned from Fernshire, and she and May assisted the Priest in his labours. Minnie Redmond, too, and the teachers of the school entered heartily into all the plans of their spiritual guide, and all worked hard to make the Feast happy and impressive. Mrs. Kemp had taken upon herself the task of superintending all the arrangements for the breakfast which was to follow in the schoolroom. This good old soul had become quite as devoted as her young mistress to her work for the Mission of St. Wilfrid's; but, so far, she had made no step towards being received into the Church. May, whose generosity had provided all that was

wanted for the happy occasion, had begged all the children to remember her and pray 'for her intentions.' These intentions included the conversion of two Protestants.

The happy morning arrived. Our Lady's Altar was radiant with lights and beautified with flowers. The good Priest's heart was very full ; it was one of those bright, happy days which repay a thousand-fold with big joys a life of daily sacrifice. He did not say many words to his dear little ones, but they read it all in his looks and in his voice, and their little hearts too were full. How contagious is zealous love for Our Lord ! Heart and soul they poured forth in the simple strains of the cheerful hymns they sang. The rich sweet voice of Lizzie seemed to carry their little hearts with it. In impressive recollection the children approached the Altar and received their Divine Guest. Many an old sinner in the church that morning wept tears of repentant joy. Grand-parents, mothers, fathers, and relatives came to receive the Sweet Saviour from whose Sacred Banquet they had been strangers for years. Father Ely had made little Apostles of the First Communicants, and they had pleaded well ; and many a happy conversion dated from that happy Feast. The imposing ceremony ended with the hymn of consecration to Our Lady ; and the children went to the schoolroom for their breakfast. They were happy indeed, and their spiritual Father, and

those they loved were with them. May Cumberland was not there.

We must inform the reader of the reason of her absence. After Mass she had hurried away to Marley Street. It was a great day in the history of the Byrnes ; although, to the good old people and to little Violet, not quite so happy a day as they would have wished—that is to say from a spiritual point of view. Effie was going to be married, to a Catholic it is true, but not to a practical one. That day was to see Miss Byrne and Mr. Willie Nelson joined in holy matrimony. We have already sketched the young lady's character, as well as that of her future husband. Those who knew anything of life could not help feeling that a cloud was resting over those young hearts. Effie Byrne was "too much of this world" to insist upon Willie's setting his soul right before entering into the sacred bond. She was eager to settle in life, desirous of having a home of her own, and thought it a lucky thing that her future husband was a Catholic, if only in name, and that she had not the bother 'to get a dispensation' for the marriage. Her parents and sister thought otherwise. They knew that Matrimony is a Sacrament of the living, and should only be entered into by Catholics who had previously prepared their souls for its blessings by Confession and Communion. They had moreover never really liked Nelson : and the fact of his utter neglect of his religious duties had made them

use all their influence to dissuade Effie from marrying him. It was of no avail. Nelson had just returned from India, and the marriage had been arranged in a hurry, as he expected another appointment abroad.

Mr. Byrne behaved handsomely, and the marriage ceremony was performed with due solemnity. May and Vi were the principal bridesmaids—and they all regretted the absence of the Doctor, who was destined for “best man,” but of course could not fulfil that important office. It was therefore given to Mr. Flopson, the junior member of the important firm in which Nelson was engaged, who had honoured the company by his august presence. Flopson was a limp and gushing young man, and we all know that gush in a woman is bad enough, but most intolerable in a man. He performed his part to his own satisfaction, and though he made as great a hash as he possibly could of his speech at the breakfast, no one took much heed, and all passed pleasantly. The bride and bridegroom departed on their honeymoon, and the party separated.

May returned with Violet to Great Burley Street, where she found Lizzie and Minnie Redmond. The affection of Lizzie for her old companion had in no way decreased with her altered position in society. May had described Minnie to the Doctor as ‘a sunny mirthful girl, a year or so older than Lizzie.’ She was some two years older. That

beautiful Feast was her birthday, and she was nineteen years of age. May welcomed her warmly with a kiss and a cheery 'Many happy returns of the day,' at the same time placing a beautiful gold locket and chain round her neck as a little token of affection.

'It is better late than never, Minnie,' said May, laughing, 'and if people will get married at inconvenient times, we little folks must put up with it. I am so glad to get back again to the quiet of my own home, and to be with you and Lizzie again. How did all things go off at your breakfast? Ours was a strange contrast to the solemnity of this morning. Mrs. Kemp had everything beautifully arranged. The children were well looked after. When breakfast was over they read a little address to Father Ely, and gave him a pretty little statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in memory of the happy day. They then enjoyed themselves for a time, and after getting their Communion medals and memorials, went home. We are to be all in readiness for the Procession this evening in honour of Our Lady.'

Minnie was indeed one of the little folks, for she stood not quite five feet high. A bright grey eye, which twinkled with mirth and perpetual good-humour, gave unmistakable evidence that she was of a sunny nature. Father Ely called her 'Dame Trot,' of which said term the little woman was mightily proud. She was one of those cheery

little souls, ever busy and cheerful, who hide their own little troubles, and make those whom they serve, or those who serve them, forgetful of the miseries of human nature, and content with their position in life. Little 'Dame Trot' was a great favourite with all; but no amount of praise and flattery seemed to spoil her. She had no aspiration above her own state of life; in her poor home, in the school, or at Miss May's, she was always the same—natural in her ways, bright and cheerful in her manner.

'Have you heard any news of Tom since he sailed?' asked May.

'Yes,' answered Minnie. 'It was so strange—I got a letter this morning. It came quite as a birthday-gift. The vessel had put in somewhere, and Tom had sent me news. There's something in it that will interest you, Miss Cumberland. I've already told Lizzie. Perhaps you wouldn't mind reading the letter. I know you won't laugh at Tom's way of addressing me. You mustn't take all he says for gospel.'

It was a very affectionate letter indeed. Tom called Minnie his own darling 'Dame Trot,' and ended by saying that he wished the steamer was going home, and that the time was come when his little Dame was Dame Burke.

Tom Burke was a fine manly fellow of about twenty-three years of age. He was one of Father Ely's 'boys,' and a great favourite of the Priest's

too. He had given the good Father a little trouble once when he was a youngster at school, but his Reverence had taken him in hand and made a fine fellow of him. Tom had profited well by his schooling, as he had worked himself into a place of trust in the same firm as Willie Nelson. Steady and honest, he had soon grown into the good opinion of his employers. Tom was one of the old Altar Boys of St. Wilfrid's; and now that he had grown to manhood, his great delight was to be on the Sanctuary, Sunday by Sunday, and to assist at the various Evening Services. His Pastor approved of his attachment to Minnie, and, knowing them to be good and sensible, was only too anxious to see them settled in life. They had consulted him, their friend and father, and had arranged to be married on that very Feast; but the unforeseen and unexpected appointment of Tom to a somewhat delicate mission on the business of the firm to their agents in Australia, had caused the eventful day to be deferred.

When May read Tom's letter her colour came and went; strange feelings were in conflict in her heart. She almost envied Minnie the happiness of being loved by that manly heart. What joy that poor girl must have felt in the knowledge that she possessed, that he whom she loved returned her love! Presently May's lips quivered and her face flushed crimson, then grew pale and sad. She had read George Spence's name in that letter. Tom

had met him on board, and was telling Minnie how the white-haired Doctor had gained the golden opinion of all in the big steamer by his kindness and goodness; how all the steerage passengers loved him, and how the children came to him; how he was quite a father to all. 'But,' added the letter, 'he looks so pale, so weary, so jaded and careworn, that he is but a wreck of the energetic man whom we all so loved at home.' Then he went on to tell how forgetful of self the good Doctor was; how he watched by the sick-bed of a poor child, cared for it, nursed it with all the tenderness of a mother; and how all on board spoke of him as the 'good Doctor.'

May pressed the letter to her lips, and tears filled her eyes. Minnie was quick to perceive the effect of the letter, and with a woman's sharpness guessed its meaning. Kindly and cheerfully she diverted the attention of Lizzie and Vi, and chatted on in a lively manner.

'It is a shame that that big firm has spirited away my dear old Tom. If he had been here, you'd have had to have been at my wedding, and not at Miss Byrne's; it's really too bad! See how all is for the best—for you couldn't have been in two places at once, and I should have lost one of my bridesmaids. So after all, it's fortunate that it is put off.'

The little Dame hid her own grief, for her little heart was pretty full—it could not be otherwise—at

the thought of her happiness deferred till she knew not when. May's grief had made her forget her own. Late in the evening she found herself alone with May.

'Dear Miss Cumberland,' she said, 'you must cheer up; wait patiently, and all will be well. You see I've learnt your secret. They are both together on the great sea, and in God's hands; we will pray for them both, and for each other, as we gather round Our Lady's Altar to-night to keep Her birthday.'

'God bless you, Minnie dear; and may He hear and grant our prayers!'

And the friends went out to prepare the children for the Procession.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO LOURDES, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE Octave day of the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity found our two friends, Lizzie and May, at Our Lady's beautiful Sanctuary at Lourdes. They had arrived the previous day. To Lizzie the feeling of being for the first time in her life in a Catholic country was one of surprise, not unmingled with awe. As she went along the route, every spire and tower of a church in each town or village occupied her attention.

‘May, darling,’ she said, ‘only to think that in every one of those Sanctuaries, scattered up and down this beautiful land, our dear Lord still dwells in the Blessed Sacrament! How I should like to get out and peep into some of those quaint-looking village churches!’

At length, after passing under the shadow of Betharram, and along the noisy Gave, they came in sight of the famous Grotto of Lourdes. No one who has ever seen it will forget that first view from the rail. The river Gave runs sparkling over its pebbly bed, here and there dashing its foaming waters against a barrier of rough stones, and then rushing on smoothly, in slight undulating waves, beneath the shade of ash, poplar, and other trees. Beyond the river is a beautiful arcade of elm and poplar trees, which suddenly ends, and the grotto is seen in all its beauty. A level plain, paved for the convenience of the pilgrims, stretches from the grotto to the low parapet which borders the water’s edge.

The grey rocks of Massabielle stand out boldly among the green foliage of the trees, the clustering evergreens and the clinging ivy. The rugged rock is pierced at its base by irregular excavations, and above them is another opening of an oval form. In that upper niche—marking the site of the Apparition to little Bernardette—is a pure white marble statue of Our Lady. Below is the grotto with its miraculous fountain. This is enclosed by

a gate and iron rails, forming a Sanctuary. From the vault is suspended a lamp of costly nature, and a silver Altar is erected within the shrine. Under those sylvan rocks numberless candles burn day and night. Outside the enclosure the water of the miraculous fountain flows to a stone reservoir, and to the baths constructed for the sake of the infirm who come to bathe in the miraculous water. Around the grotto kneel, in crowds, the pious pilgrims who visit the shrine. The steep rocks rising above the grotto are covered with verdure, roses and acacias, and a broad winding path leads up to the magnificent church of white marble, which grandly rises on the summit of the rocks of Massabielle.

Such was the imposing sight upon which the two friends gazed on that bright afternoon of the beautiful month of September. The sun shone brightly, the river made sweet music in its course, and the birds carolled gaily in the shade of the greenwood. It seemed as though all nature were keeping holiday to honour the birthday octave of that Fair Maid who is 'our fallen nature's solitary boast.'

'How glad I am,' said Lizzie, as they drew near the railway station, and the bright vision of the grotto was lost to view—'how glad I am that you proposed this beautiful journey! What a bright and almost heavenly spot! I wonder how men cease to believe in miracles and in the power of

the Mother of God when they have visited scenes like this !

‘ Ah ! Lizzie, to you it seems always more easy to believe than to doubt ; your heart has never been touched, thank God, with the taint of heresy or unbelief. All have not our beautiful gift of Faith ;’ and again May’s thoughts reverted to those so dear to her who were not Catholics. Her eyes turned in the direction of the grotto, and her lips moved in prayer.

After securing a room at the hotel and a little refreshment, May and her young companion visited the grotto. The sun was setting, and the evening was cool and pleasant. They passed along the noisy narrow street which led in the direction of the shrine. Shops and stalls line the entire length, and everyone who passes along is besieged with requests to purchase something, from a little rosary, a card, a candle, to a huge life-like statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

This to our cool English minds looks a bit strange at first sight, and we feel inclined to remonstrate with the authorities for permitting this continuous fair and sale of pious objects ; but we soon change our mind, and a good Catholic instinct tells us that the poor pilgrim must take back a *souvenir*, and that there is no harm in honest trade, even though it be in rosaries and statues. Besides, we want lots of things to take back with us, and if

there were no shops and no stalls we should be in a pretty plight.

All this was new and strange to Lizzie, but she did not think much of it, as her thoughts were too intent on the object of their visit. At length they have passed out of the noisy street, and have wended their way along the incline, passed by the open square where stands the crowned statue of Mary, and are in front of the grotto. They fall upon their knees and, with their eyes upturned to the majestic statue, pour out their hearts in fervent prayer. A deep solemn silence reigns all round. Only the rustling of leaves and the murmur of the river break the stillness. The cave seems ablaze with light. As Lizzie said, 'It seemed like going into a church when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed.' There was no official there to keep order or silence, and none was needed. If the world wants to see how men, women and children can pray, let it go to Lourdes. There, in sight of that wondrous grotto, to pray seems as natural as to breathe. Rich, poor, peasant and noble, Priest and layman, Nuns and fine-dressed ladies of fashion, are all on their knees, forgetful of all but one thing, the object of their visit. They have come to tell God and His Blessed Mother something, and to try and get some petition answered, and they are in earnest about it; they have no time for anything else. Arms outstretched, hands clasped, bodies prostrate, tears, smiles, sighs and murmured

prayer—all tell one tale, the tale of earnest supplication.

May and Lizzie rose from their prayers with souls refreshed and their spirits lightened, and after placing votive candles within the shrine, and drinking at the miraculous fountain, returned to their hotel.

This new life was indeed strange to the dark-haired maiden. Seated at the *table d'hôte* were strangers from all nations ; and English, German, and Spanish were spoken almost as generally as the native French. Lizzie understood no language save her own, but her fair companion spoke French fluently and elegantly. The novelty of the scene charmed our young friends ; it was so different from the usual Continental hotel company. Everyone said grace before and after meals. True Catholics, they were not ashamed to beg God's blessing, and to thank Him for His gracious gifts.

Early next morning our young friends were astir, and climbed the rocks to the grand Basilica Church above the grotto. In that magnificent building, lined with votive offerings, banners, and lamps, they heard Holy Mass and received Holy Communion. The number of Altars, and the fact that at each one Mass was continually being said, was new to those who had only been accustomed to the few Masses of a London church. After their devotions, they visited the crypt, and then the grotto.

On returning to their hotel, they met a pilgrimage which had come in from a neighbouring village. The good people, men and women, old and young, walked along gravely on each side of the road, accompanied by their clergy, all singing, to a simple and monotonous chant, the 'Litany of Our Lady.' It was a very touching sight.

Lizzie and May returned to the church, and remained during the solemn Mass which followed. The greater portion of that day they spent at the grotto, or in the church or crypt. About a little after mid-day a large Belgian pilgrimage arrived, bringing many sick and infirm. The majority of these pilgrims were men, including a good number of Priests and Religious. Amongst the sick whom they had brought was a poor lay-sister, whose infirmity was so trying to the Community, that they had determined to make the pilgrimage as a last resource to obtain relief for the poor sufferer. Her cough was so painful and distressing, that it not only wearied her, but, assuming more the form of the bark of a dog than of any human sound, was a source of continual distraction and worry to all with whom the poor woman lived. It was so bad that when the pilgrims arrived the poor sufferer had to be removed from the church. After the usual prayers and devotions the pilgrims visited the grotto, where public petitions were offered to the sweet Mother of Pity and Grace. The poor lay-sister was conducted into one of the baths, and

lo! after a time, returned to her companions perfectly cured of her sad malady.*

The evening of that day, the Octave day of Mary's Nativity, was one which all who witnessed ever afterwards remembered. It was one of those silent, balmy evenings so common in the south of fair France. The huge mountains looked grand in the starlight. There was no moon, but the sky was cloudless, and the stars shone brightly and brilliantly in the heavens. The space in front of the grotto was crowded with pilgrims and visitors at Lourdes.

When May and Lizzie arrived they were reciting the Rosary. Everyone present held a lighted taper. Presently the whole assembly rose, and standing, sang the *Magnificat*. Never in cathedral choir, or Gothic pile, did sweeter and more heart-stirring notes ascend than those which came from the up-raised voices of Mary's children, from the country round about and from many a distant land, singing Mary's own Canticle of Praise in her beauteous cavern shrine in the Upper Pyrenees.

Then the long processson formed and wended its way up the winding paths on the mountain-side, singing the Litany and hymns in praise of the Mother of God. Passing round the church on the summit of the mountain, the long line of bright light descended into the great square, and formed

* This incident really occurred in the September of the year in which the writer visited Lourdes.

a dense mass around the crowned statue of Mary. Then raising their tapers high above their heads, with one voice the crowd shouted, 'Vive Marie ! ('Long live Mary !').

Never was royalty, or people's favourite, greeted with such a cheer as that which rose on that starlight night, to show the deep, heartfelt devotion of Mary's children to the Queen of earth and heaven.

A happy fortnight passed quickly in that bright spot. Many a pleasant excursion did our young friends make in company with some companions who were stopping at the same hotel. An elderly gentleman, and his wife and daughter, accompanied them on their frequent journeys. Rare specimens of British nationality, these two good old souls trusted to the education of their daughter to carry them through their journeying in a strange land. The good girl spoke but very indifferent French, and but for May's promptness would have got her parents into many a strange hobble.

The pilgrimage to Betharram was amongst one of the most pleasing ones the two young friends made with their companions. The wild mount, with the wondrous chapels of the Way of the Cross all the way up its steep ascent ; the beautiful Stations of that sorrowful journey, and the life-like representation of Calvary's cruel scene, and the desolation of Mary on the summit of the mountain, could not easily be forgotten.

It was a lovely day when they made the ascent,

and the view of the valleys beyond, as seen from the top of the mount, was beyond description. One of the most lovely of the valleys shut in by mountains, with a beautiful river running through it, and the grand snow-capped peaks in the far distance, seen under the most favourable circumstances, would not fail to impress less impressionable souls than those of our two young friends. Then there was the somewhat quaint church, with its white marble statue of Our Lady and Child. No wonder that this mountain should be one of Mary's Shrines, and that Our Lady of Betharram should be so held in veneration as a place of pious pilgrimage. The statue of spotless white marble represents our sweet Mother seated with her infant Son on her lap. His arms are stretched out as if in welcome. The figures are both crowned with royal crowns of gilt metal. At Our Lady's feet is carved a small branch of a tree, for tradition says that when a little girl fell into the Gave; at the foot of the mountain, Our Lady appeared, and stretching forth a branch to the sinking child, drew her to the bank. A sweet statue—a beautiful story—an emblem of each one's life. How often has Mary extended the olive-branch of peace to us, sinking in the sad stream of life, and drawn us on to the firm land, where our Brother, Mary's child, is stretching forth a welcome to us !

Lizzie longed to see 'the home of the birth' of the beautiful river that ran though Lourdes. Guides

had pointed to the Haute Montagne, covered with its perpetual snows. A journey was therefore planned that the cascade of Gavarnie, which falls from one of those peaks which no human foot has ever trod, might be visited. It was a bright morning when the party started on their journey to the last town in France.

Through the smiling valley guarded by the old fortress of Lourdes the happy party drove, passing village and hamlet till they were lost in the grand scenery of the beautiful Pyrenees. Bright verdant spots, like fairy homes in the midst of the terrible grandeur of those grim mountains, were passed. Every inch of ground that could be cultivated shone like a garden in the midst of hard rock and rugged wilderness, and spoke of a happy, industrious peasantry. Well-kept churches and wayside crosses reminded the stranger that he was travelling in a Catholic country.

As they ascended into the heart of the mountain range, the wild beauty of the scene quite overwhelmed with its majesty, and awed with its beautiful variety, her whose life had been passed in poverty and the quiet simplicity of an English home. Lizzie was well-nigh spell-bound at the sight of those vast mountains, piled one above the other, and the roaring cascades, leaping from great heights and swelling the foaming torrent which rushed in the chasm many feet below.

And so they journeyed to San Sauveur. Here

they alighted, and after some rest and refreshment, and a stroll among the surpassing beauties of the place, proceeded on their way. The scenery became wilder and grander as they advanced. At length, when the shades of evening began to fall upon them, they entered the little village—for it is scarcely more than a village—of Gavarnie, in full view of the peak covered with snow. After a visit to the poor little church, with its strange treasure of Knight-Templars' heads, they composed themselves in the quaint hotel, discussing the beauty of their excursion and the incidents of the day's drive.

The shepherd's horn in the mountain-passes often sounded through the stillness of the night. When morning dawned our young friends were astir. A wonderful sight met their gaze. The landscape was covered with a light snow. The sun soon melted it in the lower passes, but on the higher parts of the rocks it shone with a dazzling brightness.

After hearing Mass in the little chapel, and a hasty breakfast, they set out up the rugged mountain road which led to the foot of the famous cascade. The morning was bright and sharp, and not a cloud obscured the almost enchanting view before them. Many a time they halted and looked back on the lovely scene through which they had passed. At length the desired spot was reached, and they feasted their eyes on the magnificent cascade which

fell from the ever-snow-capped peak which towered high above the black masses of rock around.

As they turned to descend, huge clouds of mist began to wrap themselves round the mountain-tops and to descend into the passes below, and soon the beautiful scene was quite obscured. They reached their hotel, and were soon on their journey downward. The day set in cold, bleak, wet, and desolate. The rain drove in upon them, and the wind howled among the mountains. The travellers felt chill and weary. Towards the afternoon the rain ceased, and the sun was again shining brightly as they drove through the valley of Laveran into the town of Lourdes. Tired though they were that evening, the two friends again visited the grotto.

Next morning Lizzie complained of pains in her limbs, and a feverish flush was in her cheek ; her lips were dry and parched. It was evident that she had caught a severe chill on the previous day. Contrary to May's advice she rose, dressed herself, and went down to the church for early Mass ; but she became so ill that she had to return in a carriage. It happened, fortunately for them, that one of their newly-made friends was a doctor, and so they consulted him at once. Dr. Pegler, for such was the worthy man's name, ordered the patient at once to her room, and set to work with the greatest kindness and zeal to minister to her wants. Her sudden sickness had cast quite a gloom over the inmates of the hotel. Mrs. Pegler and her daughter

were full of sympathy and kind services. It was well for May that she had found such useful friends, for Lizzie's symptoms grew worse, and the next day it was feared fever would ensue. She had rambled much in her speech during the night, and had grown more restless. Frequently she had kissed the little rosary ring that she wore on her left hand, and had muttered, 'for ever, for ever.' It was a time of intense anxiety for poor May, but she bore up well. At times she stole away from the patient, not to rest, but to drive hastily to the grotto and implore the help of their common Mother, Mary. After the fourth day the feverish signs left her, she rested calmly, and rapidly grew better. But those few days had wrought strange havoc in the frail frame of the dark-haired girl. The weather had broken, and the nights became wet and dreary, and during the day rain fell at times, and then the bright sun shone in all its brilliancy. The doctor proposed a change of scene, and it was agreed that May and Lizzie should accompany Dr. Pegler and his family to Biarritz as soon as arrangements could possibly be made.

The last day at Lourdes came. Lizzie and May rose early. A night of rain had given place to a glorious morning. As they looked from the window of their room towards the church a beautiful sight presented itself. A perfect rainbow stretched from beyond the rocks to the rising hills beyond the river. The prismatic arch spanned the landscape,

and under the bow rose the white church of Our Lady. The sun was shining through the rising mists. As they gazed they remembered the words of promise, 'And the bow shall be in the clouds, and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant that was made between God and every living soul of all flesh which is upon the earth.' Surely Mary was the real bow of the Everlasting Covenant—Mary whose tears of sorrow and intercession were lit up with the glory of the Eternal Sun of justice—and formed a rainbow of hope and eternal promise which gladdens the sad heart of poor humanity.

The two friends paid a farewell visit to the church and grotto. Leaning on May and the kind old doctor, folded in wraps and shawls, Lizzie walked from the carriage to Our Lady's Shrine. She knelt on the spot on which Bernadette knelt when she saw the heavenly vision. Her lips moved in prayer; her hands were stretched out, and her eyes fixed upon the statue above her. May knelt at her side, forgetful even of the sick girl beside her, so earnestly was she rapt in prayer. 'Grant,' she prayed, 'O dear Lord, through Mary's intercession, my request. Grant the conversion of my faithful servant, who has been a mother to me. O Mary, pray for her, and for him who has grown so very dear to me. I give, if necessary, my life for their conversion. Send me sorrow and suffering, if need be; but bring him into

Thy true fold. Accept, if it be Thy will, O God, the sacrifice of my life for his conversion. O Mary, bless him here and hereafter.'

We sometimes pray and know not, or rather think not, at the time of the deep purport of our prayers and promises. How literally they are answered the future oftentimes reveals.

That same evening Lizzie, May, and the doctor's family arrived at Biarritz, and drove to the snug little Hôtel de Vieux Port.

The gay little town, overlooking the Bay of Biscay, is called the Bournemouth of France. Its sun-warmed and bracing air, tempered by the winds that blow 'on Biscay's sleepless Bay,' makes it a favourite resort in the bleaker months of the year. It is an ambitious little place, and caters for all the wants of society. Its magnificent hotels, its English Club, its open-air music, its beautiful promenades, its gay cafés, sumptuous villas, and well-conducted baths tell their own tale. A bright sky, a beautiful country, and a wondrous long advance of the blue Atlantic waves beating on its rock-bound coast, are attractions sufficient in themselves to make the locality a favourite one. It has the double advantage of being a quiet and a lively town. Quietude, almost to solitariness, or the gay whirl of society, can be indulged in at will, by visitors to this charming spot.

The day after the arrival Lizzie felt sufficiently strong to present herself at the *table d'hôte*: good

Dr. Pegler being of opinion that a little society would benefit his patient.

As Lizzie entered the dining-saloon, pale but very beautiful, leaning on the arm of her fair young friend May Cumberland, all eyes were turned towards her. At the extreme end of the apartment was a tall red-haired lady, who had no sooner set eyes upon the pale-faced girl than her lips quivered, her face grew ashy-pale, and her limbs began to tremble as though she had seen a vision from the grave. By a violent effort she overcame her emotions and repressed an exclamation which almost rose to her lips. That lady was the Honourable Laura Mapleson.

CHAPTER XI.

FRIEND OR FOE?

LEAVING the Hôtel de Vieux Port, and passing by the old Port, the visitor at Biarritz reaches a little rugged grass-covered rock which runs out into the sea. Among the trees that grow on this quiet spot, or in some other sheltered place near at hand, he will find quiet and rest on the bright sunny days when the great crowd is regaling itself, and 'all the world,' as the French express it, is enjoying itself in the gay little town, or on the noisy sands which stretch between the Grand Hotel

and the great house built by the late Emperor Napoleon. The neighbourhood of this spot became a favourite resort of our two young friends, May and Lizzie. There they would sit for hours looking

‘O’er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,’

thinking of those who dwelt far beyond; or, as some white sail fluttered in the distance, dreaming day-dreams of him who was passing over those mighty depths on his long journey.

On the second morning after their arrival they had been seated some time on the spot, which afterwards they visited so often, when they suddenly discovered they were not alone. Coming towards them was a tall red-haired lady, of florid complexion, dressed in the height of fashion. She approached them and spoke. Lizzie started and looked at her. The lady was perfectly self-possessed.

‘May I be excused,’ said the Honourable Laura, for it was no other, ‘for introducing myself to my countrywomen? I have noticed you at the *table d’hôte* of the homely little hotel where I am staying, and have longed to make your acquaintance. It is so very refreshing to hear one’s own native tongue again, and to be able to speak it, after twisting one’s mouth into all manner of strange shapes by the contortions of a foreign language. Is not this a lovely spot? I have been strolling along the beautiful sands that stretch southward

from the town along the bay, in hopes of meeting you. I am getting simply tired even of this bright spot for want of some one to interchange ideas with in my own tongue. Have you been long in the South of France ?

‘ We arrived here two days ago, and owe our visit to this place to the indisposition of my young friend,’ said May.

‘ You interest me much. Have you been long ill, Miss——’ and Laura paused.

‘ Lizzie Mount,’ abruptly broke in the sick girl, looking straight at her interrogator. ‘ Miss Cumberland and myself have only just come from Lourdes, where we have been visiting the miraculous shrine of Our Lady. Unfortunately, on an excursion into the Pyrenees, I caught a severe cold, which induced us to come here for the change of air.’

The Honourable Laura broke out into a rapturous eulogy of Lourdes and its neighbourhood ; and after some further description of the beauties of that part of fair France, she added :

‘ For myself, not being a Catholic, the place had a strange attraction. I had heard much of it, and was anxious to see it ; but I cannot understand what I saw and heard. I heard frequently of miracles, but I saw none—at least no cures which could not, I think, be accounted for otherwise than by a miracle. But then,’ she added quickly, seeing Lizzie’s face flush, ‘ I know nothing about these things, and I am very prejudiced, and that accounts for all my views.’

She at once saw that she was venturing on dangerous ground, and hastened to change the subject by introducing herself as Miss Mapleson.

‘I spend a great deal of my time in travelling about—simply because I have nothing else to do—and that sort of life amuses me, and agrees with me. Have you been long in the South of France ?’

‘Over three weeks,’ returned May.

‘And you have visited that charming spot, San Sauveur ?’

‘We had only the pleasure of passing through it on our way to Gavarnie.’

‘I remained there myself some little while last year, and was quite fascinated with the spot. Everything is so much brighter than in our own dingy country ; but after all, England has its bright spots, and London its great and many attractions. Perhaps you reside in London ?’

‘Not entirely,’ answered May ; ‘we have been for some time staying in Fernshire.’

‘Fernshire ! I remember some years ago visiting an old lady and gentleman, with some friends of theirs with whom I was staying. It was a lovely spot where this good old couple dwelt. There are some very beautiful estates in that county. If ever I settled in life I think I should like to live quietly in Fernshire. Perhaps Miss Cumberland intends settling in life ?’

May blushed and shook her head.

‘As for myself,’ continued Lady Laura, ‘I’m

a perfect Bohemian. I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me. I spend a delightful existence in roaming about from place to place.

The Honourable Laura would have continued the conversation but for the arrival of Dr. Pegler and his daughter. She bade the young friends good day and left them, having performed the task she had set herself, and gained as much knowledge as she deemed prudent for the time being.

‘So you’ve been entertaining the great ones of this world, dears,’ observed the doctor good-humouredly.

‘What do you mean, doctor?’ asked Lizzie.

‘Why, isn’t that the Honourable Miss Mapleson who has just left you?’

After a short walk they returned to the hotel. When May and Lizzie were alone, the former said to her convalescing friend, ‘Why, Lizzie dear, did you start so when the Honourable Miss Mapleson first spoke to us to-day; and why did you look so hard at her?’

‘Did I?’ returned Lizzie. ‘Well, I don’t wonder at it, for I feel convinced I have heard that voice before. I looked at her, I suppose, to try and recollect her features, but I cannot recall them. Yet I feel sure I’ve met her somewhere. The ring of the voice seems familiar; but I cannot remember when or where I heard it.’

‘I do not take to her at all, darling,’ said May.

‘No more do I,’ replied her friend. ‘There is

something which seems to say, "Beware of that woman." I don't know why I should have such a foolish prejudice against a perfect stranger, but yet I cannot get over the feeling of antipathy which seemed to possess me directly she spoke. I wish I hadn't such strong first impressions, May, dearest; it almost makes me miserable to think about them.'

'In spite of ourselves we both seemed very reserved in her presence,' said May.

'Yes; somehow she seemed to drive one into one's shell, didn't she?' said Lizzie, laughing. 'But come! let's think and talk about something else more pleasant; for after all what has she to do with us, or we to do with her, except as casual acquaintances who meet once and part for ever? Let us be kind to her—she said she had none to care for her; and perhaps that may account for her strange and somewhat forward manner.'

'Ah, darling!' said May. 'God bless you! you always take the kind view of everything.'

'Isn't it best, dearest?' responded her young friend. 'It costs no more than the unkind view; and doesn't it bring its own reward? I don't expect to get a very bright crown for that, I assure you,' she added, laughing.

The next day brought the two friends very glad tidings, and flooded their hearts with grateful joy. Two letters reached them—or rather May—one from Father Ely, and one from Mrs. Kemp. It was the news of her reception into the Church.

Father Ely said that at length he felt that the hour of grace had come for the dear old soul ; and in spite of Mrs. Kemp's protestations that she would rather wait, he had told her to go to the church and that he would come to her. He then, after being convinced that she knew sufficient of the Catholic doctrine, made her commence her confession ; after three days she was to come again, finish her confession, get conditionally baptized, and be formally received into the Church. She had obeyed in all things with the ready obedience of a little child. Mrs. Kemp's letter was a very long one, giving a minute description of all that had taken place : how that going to the good Father one morning with a message from the letter received from May, he had told her that the time was come when she must be a Catholic, really and truly, and not only in sentiment ; how she had begged time, but that at length she had told Father Ely that ' he knew best,' and had submitted to his wishes. She ended at length by saying how very happy she felt, and that it seemed as though she had grown quite young again ; and begged them both to join in thanking God, and His blessed Mother, for this great mercy.

May understood now the truth of the good Father's saying that ' all things come round to those who will but pray, and wait with patience ;' and this gave her renewed hope of the conversion of another who had grown very dear to her.

Little or nothing occupied the thoughts and conversation of the two friends but the joyful news of the morning; they talked it over with the good old doctor and his family, and spent a fair portion of the day in writing letters of congratulation to Father Ely and Mrs. Kemp.

The afternoon came, and again they strolled out to their favourite spot overlooking the beautiful blue waters of Biscay Bay. They found the Honourable Laura already there. She was unremitting in her attentions, but did not thrust herself too much upon them, and, excusing herself after a few words, left them to enjoy their own society. It may perhaps at first sight seem strange that Laura Mapleson was so composed when she first addressed herself to May and Lizzie. The fact was that, with all her strength of mind and power of will, it had taken her some time to nerve herself for the interview. She had previously learnt at the hotel who the pale-faced lady was, and the name itself was a new surprise to her, though she more than half suspected it. She was determined to find out all she could, and the present opportunity was not to be lost. She was so well versed in hiding her feelings, that she had no fear of betraying herself.

A week soon passed. The bracing sea air and the genial sunshine soon restored health and vigour to Lizzie's frame. Before the end of a fortnight she was quite strong and well again. At length the

day drew nigh for their homeward journey. Laura Mapleson was more than ever attentive.

‘I shall miss you both very much when you have gone ; but I hope we shall meet again. I remain for a time in this delightful spot ; and after a short visit to Paris must make up my mind where to settle for the winter. My dear young friend,’ continued Laura, addressing herself to Lizzie, ‘I’m sorry I’ve no settled abode to ask you to, but perhaps we shall meet again.’

There was a pause in the conversation. Laura was evidently trying to find out where in London the young friends lived. They either did not understand her drift, or were unwilling to give the desired information. She tried again, but again failed.

‘Will it be long before you return home, Miss Cumberland ?’ she asked.

‘We go direct to Paris, where we remain a few days, and then we shall go straight home.’

‘Well,’ said Laura, ‘I suppose I must say good-bye ;’ and then she added, taking from her finger a ring, and offering it to Lizzie : ‘You remind me of a happy past. When I first saw you I felt interested in you. Please me by accepting this little memento of our casual acquaintance, and sometimes think kindly of Laura Mapleson.’

Before Lizzie could finish her few words of thanks, the red-haired lady had left their presence. Lizzie examined the ring. It was a plain band of gold, containing a single pearl set in rubies.

With a merry little laugh she put it on her finger, saying to May :

‘There’s the pearl of innocence, surrounded by the rubies of suffering, set in the pure gold of true love ;’ and then she added : ‘It’s a pretty present ; but I wish she hadn’t given it to me.’

The two friends departed for Paris. That same night found Laura Mapleson pacing her room in a fit of feverish excitement. The wily woman’s better nature had been struggling all day for the mastery. The innocent child had almost overcome her ; she had felt herself powerless for evil in her presence. The words of that pale-faced maiden’s farewell still rang in her ears. ‘How can I thank you ? Good-bye : God bless you.’ Again all the old, old love of a strong womanly nature came up and pleaded with her ; but again the purer emotions of her heart she forced back and stifled. A storm was raging in her soul.

‘Fool that I was, to let that pale-faced girl so unnerve me !’ she muttered to herself as she paced to and fro. ‘Would that I had kept my feelings and my gift to myself ! How I hate her ! The dead live—but,’ she added with her teeth set, ‘the living die ! What strange accident can have raised her to her present state ! They must never meet ; but if they do, what then ? Well, well ! it will be time enough to think “what then ?” when they *do* meet. I must think what must now be done, for this meeting has altered all my plans.’

And she sat down to think.

Again she rose and paced the room ; then suddenly she stopped and added, half aloud :

‘Yes, that will do.’

She calmly retired to rest, and slept soundly.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE WIDE OCEAN.

THE good ship *Kangaroo* was making a splendid voyage, and wind and weather favouring, and God permitting, her good captain hoped to reach his destination in less time than he had ever done before. It was a fine steamer, and had on board a goodly number of cabin and steerage passengers.

Tom Burke and the white-haired Doctor had become great friends. From his companion George Spence had learnt the latest tidings of May and Lizzie.

‘It is well for that good child Lizzie Mount,’ said Tom one evening, as they paced the deck together, ‘that so kind a Providence has watched over her. You see, Doctor, my little Minnie has known her so long, and been so much with her, that I’ve got to look upon them as sisters.’

‘Can you remember her very long ago ?’ asked George.

‘Oh yes! she was quite a youngster when her mother first came to live amongst us. We were all of us very much struck with her at the time; although she wasn’t nine years old she was a tall, intelligent child.’

‘And her mother?’

‘Mrs. Mount was a very reserved woman. She kept herself very much to herself, and mixed very little with her neighbours. She was always very jealous of any attention shown to the child; and, with the exception of Minnie, very few children ever visited her rooms, or were allowed with Lizzie. As for my little Dame, as I’ve said, they were always together. A perfect contrast they were too: Lizzie was always a staid and thoughtful child, and very cheerful; but Minnie, as long as I can remember her, was brimful of fun, and fond of playing practical jokes on everybody. One of her practical jokes nearly cost Lizzie her life; but I’ll tell you about it sometime or other, for I see some one is looking for you. You’re probably wanted again to see Mrs. Atwell’s little boy.’

So it turned out. The Atwells were steerage passengers, who had left the old country to look for better fortune in the great colony. They had seen better days. Time was when ‘Bill Atwell,’ as they called him on board, was known as William Atwell, Esquire. He had married young, and with his wife had received a very decent fortune. Things went well with him for a time, and then came sick-

ness and misfortune ; at length poverty. He managed to get a very good situation, when again his health failed him, and then again came poverty. The home was broken up ; fever had carried off all their children—three girls—except the youngest, a little boy, Willie. Carry Atwell had borne up well against it all. And now little Willie was sick.

‘Cheer up, William,’ she would say to her husband ; ‘a better fortune, maybe, awaits us in the new land. It was hard to part from the land where our little ones are resting ; but their pure spirits will watch over us. We’ve little Willie left, and for his sake you must cheer up.’

What these poor unhappy people would have done but for the good Doctor is questionable. George was a father and friend to them. That poor little sick child of eight loved him most tenderly. When none could quiet or soothe him, one word from his white-haired friend calmed his grief, and seemed to make him forget his pain. For hours together the Doctor would remain with him, telling him the same old fairy-tales of which the little listener never tired. Mrs. Atwell was a Catholic, [and the boy had been baptized in his mother’s faith. There was no Catholic Priest on board, and so the consolation which would have been hers under other circumstances was denied the poor woman. Her husband was well-disposed towards the Church, and it was the kindness of a Catholic Priest that had procured for them the

means of emigration. All the little comforts and nourishments that could be obtained on board for the sick boy, George willingly procured and paid for. In that child's sufferings he seemed to forget his own. It was a strange sight to see that quaint little figure sitting in the sunshine, propped up on board, with the Doctor chatting to him.

'Mother has been telling me that when I die, if I am good, I shall go to heaven, and see Jesus and His Mother Mary, and my little sisters who are dead. Where is heaven? Mother says it is a very big place, and very beautiful; but where is it? Mother says heaven is where God is, and that all people there are good and happy! But God is everywhere; and this isn't heaven. Where is it? is it a long way off? Does the sun always shine there? and do the birds sing?'

Such, and a hundred such, questions would the little fellow ask. That little Catholic child, with his simple faith, made the Doctor begin to think. For the first time in his life he began to think seriously about God. There was something exquisitely touching and beautiful in that little child's thoughts. They reminded him very much of Lizzie. The boy's earnest ways; his realisation of the unseen presence of God; his fervent little prayers to Our Lord and Our Lady, in which he made the Doctor join—and George did not dare refuse him anything—all this brought home the thoughts of that saintly child whom he had left in England.

So George learnt the Our Father, and the Hail Mary! And after he had told little Willie some pretty story, he would ask the child to tell him one in return.

It was strange how the boy's thoughts dwelt on sacred subjects. He narrated in his own simple ways the Bible History stories he had learnt at school from the good Nuns. He told how God had made our first parents good, and put them in a beautiful garden; and how Eve had been wicked, and done what she was told not to do; how God loved them, but had to punish them because He was their Father; 'and,' added the child, 'like my father when he punishes me, God didn't punish them because He didn't love them, but because He wanted to make them better—and they'd been naughty—and all the good things He'd given them He took away for a long time, and turned them out of the beautiful garden. You see,' said the child, 'they hadn't any mother to go to, to ask her to get their father to forgive them at once, for Mary wasn't born then.' And then the child would tell the simple story of the Incarnation; of the birth of the Saviour; of the Wise Kings' journey, which was more wonderful than any of the stories that the Doctor could tell him.

'And Jesus loved little children, and made them well when they were sick; and He'll make me well and strong some day, if I'm good—won't He, Doctor?' asked little Willie.

George was not theologian enough to answer the little fellow's question ; he managed always to turn the subject, which it is so easy to do with children ; but he always went out of that child's presence a humbler man and full of grave thoughts.

There wasn't one on board who didn't love the white-haired, care-worn Doctor. Most of his time he passed among the steerage passengers. Tom was often with him. 'The good Doctor and his jolly young friend !' was the expression among those good-hearted people, by which they spoke of them. And so the days and nights came and went ; and the good ship continued her rapid course.

One afternoon the bright sun was setting in a grand bank of clouds, and red light flooded the ocean. Here and there the sky seemed as though on fire ; and the edges of clouds shone like burnished gold. The whole heavens and ocean were ablaze. There was scarcely a ripple on the sea ; the wind had dropped ; there was no sound but the splashing of the screw and the ploughing of the steamer through the silent waters.

'What a grand sight, Doctor !' said Tom, calling his friend's attention to the beautiful sunset.

George was lost in thought. Little Willie had been telling him the story of the Big Ship when all the world were drowned, except those whom God put into it. 'But,' added the child, 'the world won't be drowned again ; but it will be all burnt up, except those who are in God's Big Ship which

St. Peter will look after, as he did when he took Jesus across the sea.'

It was a very simple thing, and simply put, in a child's way ; but that glorious sunset brought it all back to the strong man, who had braved storm and danger in many ways, and his soul was flooded with serious thought.

'Why, Doctor!' exclaimed Tom, 'you seem terribly serious to-night. What makes you so thoughtful ?'

'I've been thinking about little Willie Atwell a good deal lately. When I was a boy of his age, my parents made religion hateful to me, and I've hated it ever since. I've always looked upon it as cant and nonsense ; but this poor little child seems to have no other joy than thinking and talking about religious subjects that he has been taught : it is his great comfort and consolation.'

'Well, you see,' said Tom, in his blunt, homely way, 'the child's a Catholic, and you were a Protestant ; and that makes all the difference. Our Faith is our great joy—the one thing that makes us happy. See how happy Lizzie Mount is, and always was. Those Catholics who stick to their religion are always happy ; look at my little Dame Minnie.'

'Or yourself,' suggested George. 'Well,' he added, after a silence, 'I am beginning to learn. I suppose I've been through the world, so far, with my eyes shut.'

They went on talking about many little incidents of the past, and the evening closed upon them. The bright sunset had disappeared ; the stars were shining in an almost cloudless sky ; a light breeze had sprung up, and the waters rippled gently around the vessel. They were speaking of those whom they had left at home, when the Doctor said :

‘Talking of Lizzie and Minnie, you said you’d tell me about that practical joke which your little Dame played, which, almost cost Lizzie her life. What was it ?’

‘Our good Priest, Father Ely, took a lot of children down to the seaside for an excursion. Lizzie Mount was then about twelve years old. We were all enjoying ourselves, and a lot of us were with the good Father on a steep breakwater. The sea was very calm, but the tide was in, and at the place where we stood the water was deep. Lizzie was standing on the edge looking over, when Minnie, in fun, gave her a little push, and frightened her. Lizzie gave a shout, and sprang forward into the sea. I was near Father Ely, and in a moment off went my boots and jacket, and I had the child landed in less than no time. I was always a strong swimmer, and never afraid of the water.’

‘You’re a brave fellow, Tom ; and may God bless you !’ said George, grasping his friend’s hand.

‘That’s just what Father Ely said ; and I was

mightily proud of it, I can tell you. When we reached home, Mrs. Mount came to see me, and thanked me kindly. "God reward you," she said, "for your good act! accept this little token of Lizzie's mother's gratitude;" and she gave me a small locket, which——'

He had not time to finish his sentence. A loud cry came from the steerage passengers; and looking in that direction, they saw plainly the dreadful calamity that had happened. A tongue of flame shot upwards, in the midst of a dense wreath of smoke. The steamer was on fire!

A scene of confusion occurred on board which baffles description. There was a stampede to the upper deck, and a rush to the far end of the steamer—as distant as possible from the conflagration.

The Captain, remembering that he had among his cargo much inflammable substance, speedily lowered the boats, and the passengers were soon safely transferred to them. The Doctor and Tom never lost their presence of mind, and were invaluable in the assistance that they rendered.

The flames gained ground at every moment, in spite of the water that was poured upon them. Volumes of smoke shot up as fresh portions caught fire, and the burning decks fell in with a crash.

It was seen that it was useless to try and save the vessel. What provisions could be hastily gathered together were thrown into the boats, and

several casks of water lowered. The fire spread so rapidly, that it was necessary to push off the boats to a distance, leaving one boat along side to bring off a few of the crew, who, with the Captain, the Doctor, and Tom, remained behind to save what they could in the way of provisions, rugs, and clothing.

The whole of the fore part of the vessel was now in flames, and the heat and smoke became intolerable. The Captain gave the order to man the boat, and push off as soon as possible.

George and Tom were just about to descend, when from one of the boats separated from the rest and nearest to them, they heard a voice calling. It was the voice of Mrs. Atwell. In the glare of the fire she recognised the Doctor. She had looked among her companions for her husband and her child. They were not there !

‘My boy—my darling boy ! Oh, Doctor, save my darling boy !’

George and Tom heard the mother’s supplicating cries, and rapidly ascended the side of the burning steamer. In a minute they were lost to view.

‘Good heavens !’ exclaimed the Captain ; ‘those men have gone to their death. If the flames reach the engine-room, nothing can save them, or us. We cannot stay near ; push off a little. Steady, my men !’ The burning embers were falling into the boat.

George had penetrated some distance, with Tom by his side. The smoke almost suffocated them.

‘It is no use, Tom,’ said the Doctor. ‘If the boy has been left behind, he is dead by this time ; we cannot possibly get at him !’

The steerage portion of the steamer was burning like a huge furnace. The sides of the vessel were giving way, and the sea was pouring in. It was death from fire or drowning, if they remained, for the steamer would have dragged them under with her. They tried to return to the ladder. At length they reached it, but the boat was gone !

Off with your boots and coat, man !’ said Tom. There’s no time to lose ; she’s sinking. Now, then. “Holy Mary !”’ said Tom, crossing himself.

‘Mother of God, pray for us !’ exclaimed the Doctor, almost unconsciously.

The two friends plunged together into the sea !

A minute afterwards there came a hissing sound. Steam and smoke and sparks flew upwards, and the good ship *Kangaroo* had gone down into the vast deep.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FATHER’S CARE.

ST. WILFRID’S MISSION had been in a state of great excitement during the absence of our two friends, May Cumberland and Lizzie, in

the south of fair France. Not a word, however, of what was taking place had been communicated to them. Father Ely had given strict orders that they were not to be troubled with what, after all, might prove to be but a false alarm. The Ecclesiastical Superiors of this good Priest had nominated him to fill the vacant post of Rector of a College abroad for the training of Priests. Directly his devoted flock heard of it they left no stone unturned to prevent the loss of one who had become so endeared to them. In spite of all Father Ely could do, deputations with memorials and petitions waited upon his Superiors, their prayers prevailed, and the good Priest was left in charge of St. Wilfrid's.

It had been a period of great anxiety to Father Ely. He was devoted to his work and loved his flock with a father's tenderness. Every energy of his nature he gave to the well-being of the Mission confided to him. He had prayed to live and die in the midst of his children; nevertheless, remembering his promise to obey his Superiors, he saw in their commands a higher will than that of man. He therefore left himself entirely at their disposal. It was not without great thankfulness that he learnt eventually that he was to remain at his post.

There were great rejoicings in consequence. Nothing would satisfy the people but that a testimonial should be presented to their Pastor. When a Priest works hard night and day for the benefit

of his flock, although he looks for no earthly reward, yet untold consolations come to him, and his people delight in nothing better than an opportunity to express to him their love and gratitude. They knew right well that to give Father Ely a purse of money meant only to give it to the church or schools, for he would have surely spent every penny of it on the Mission with as little delay as possible. The testimonial took the form of a handsome chalice, and set of vestments, accompanied with the usual elaborately illuminated address, setting forth their gratitude and affection to their good Pastor.

A few days after the return of May and Lizzie, a grand meeting was called in the schoolroom, and the testimonial presented in due form. It was a most touching sight. The school was thronged, the greater portion of those present being men. As the good Father entered the room, they cheered him again and again most lustily. The members of his loved Confraternity, the men of the Holy Family, and the young men and youths of the Guild of St. Aloysius, had mustered in full strength; badges and medals were worn, and holiday attire put on. In addition to the great general testimonial, each Confraternity had its own little offering to make, and its own address to present by its president. The children had already made their congratulatory address and offerings. It was a bright happy day for all. Never before did Father Ely and his people understand how closely their

hearts were bound together ; for never did they realise, till the prospect of separation came, how sincerely they loved each other. It was therefore in the very fulness of their hearts that Priest and flock greeted each other on this memorable occasion. The world cannot understand the love of Catholics for their Pastors, because it knows nothing of the supernatural, and does not believe in pure love and disinterested affection. The good shepherd gives the energy of his life for his flock—they know him and he knows them—and they trust in him, and confide in him, with a trust and a confidence which a carping and self-seeking world can neither realise nor understand.

None were more full of joy than Lizzie, May, Minnie and the dear old Mrs. Kemp. They had determined to celebrate the joyful occasion in a quiet little domestic way, and they made the good Priest promise to come in on the next afternoon and spend an hour or so with them.

A homely little tea-party it was. Father Ely and Mrs. Kemp re-told the history of that good soul's conversion. The fears and anxieties resulting from the threatened removal were all commented upon, little incidents of the journey to Lourdes told, and thus the time slipped by quickly.

Lizzie and May were telling Father Ely of their adventures at Biarritz. Mrs. Kemp and Minnie were not present.

‘And, Father,’ said Lizzie, in her laughing way,

‘I’ve made a new acquaintance ; a lady—a real honourable lady—has taken quite a fancy to me. Hasn’t she, May ?’

‘Ah ! I’m afraid, children, you ought to have had somebody to look after you.’

‘And so we had,’ said May. ‘There was dear old Dr. Pegler and his wife and daughter. I shall be so glad when they come up to London, then you’ll know them. They were such good Catholics. But Lizzie was telling you about her new friend ! I shall be *nowhere* soon, that’s evident.’

‘She gave me this beautiful ring. We met the lady at Biarritz. She was a tall lady of rather pleasing features—about forty, I should think—dressed in the height of fashion ; and her hair was “vivid auburn.”’

‘Did she tell you her name ?’ asked Father Ely, his face wearing a very anxious look of inquiry.

‘Oh yes ; she made no secret of it. She seemed very anxious to know all about us, and spoke in a very tolerant and patronising way of Catholics. We neither of us took to her much.’

‘But you have not told me her name, dear child,’ said the Priest, in a slight tone of impatience.

‘The Honourable Laura Mapleson,’ said Lizzie, drawing herself up and imitating the tone of voice and manner of that honourable lady to such perfection, that May went off into a convulsion of laughter, and even the good Father, in spite of his surprise, could not help smiling. Then a look of anxiety

settled on his face, which Lizzie perceived at once.

‘Do you know anything of the lady, Father?’ she asked in astonishment.

‘I have met her once, and I shall never forget the meeting. At that time I thanked God that such a woman had never crossed my path. I had hoped that our paths in life would prevent our being brought together again, and that no circumstances might happen which would throw any of my children in her way. I cannot help thinking that it would have been better, in a worldly sense, that you had never met that lady; but Providence has ordained it otherwise, and we must not doubt that you have met for some wise end. Nevertheless, take my advice, and should you meet again, keep as far from her influence as possible.’

‘You need not fear that, for May and I have a very strong feeling of antipathy in that quarter. You always told us to take care of our antipathies; that our sympathies would look after themselves.’

‘Yes, child; but sometimes first impressions are great graces. If we used our antipathies with caution, and taking them only as warnings to ‘be careful,’ and acted in charity and not with haste or without advice, many a sorrowful misfortune would be averted.’

‘And the ring which she has given me, should I wear it?’

‘What did you promise?’ said Father Ely.

‘Nothing,’ answered Lizzie; ‘she asked me to accept it as a little remembrance of our short acquaintance, and almost before I could answer she had gone away. That was the last we saw of her.’

‘Keep it then, child; but do not wear it. And with regard to Lady Mapleson we will trouble ourselves no more: for why should we meet crosses half-way? Whatever happens will be for the best, although we do not see it now; so we will leave ourselves and the future in the hands of that kind Providence which has so well watched over you both up to the present.’

The good Priest then wished his children good-evening, and returned to his presbytery. His thoughts were somewhat troubled as he walked along. The appearance of this cunning woman of the world within the inner circle of his own sphere of existence, and her forced acquaintance with the child in whose welfare he took so lively an interest, greatly disturbed him. It was not without an effort that he put the thoughts from him. Having once done so, he returned to his missionary work with renewed energy.

The next morning a new surprise awaited him. He had finished his breakfast, and, as was his wont, he was glancing over the morning paper. He gave a quarter of an hour to this each morning, feeling it his duty to know at least something of what was passing in the big world around him. His eyes caught a paragraph which he read several

times. It was reported that a telegraphic message had been transmitted by the captain of some vessel to the effect that after passing a certain point on his homeward journey, he had observed in the far distance what appeared to be a ship on fire. He had altered his course and sailed in the direction in which he had last seen the light, but the only thing they had come across was a life-buoy, bearing the name of the *Kangaroo*. The night was dark; they had scanned the ocean, but no signs of boats were visible, so they continued their course. As no news had been received of the steamer *Kangaroo*, bound for Australia, carrying passengers and cargo, it was feared that perhaps that vessel had been burnt and lost at sea.

The good Father carefully tore out the paragraph, and put it away in his desk, not wishing anyone to see it. He did not mention the knowledge he had gained to anyone. He was too well aware that, after all, it might be but an unfounded report. Knowing, however, that the Doctor and Tom—his old boy Tom—were on board, he felt very anxious, and as soon as he had finished his morning's work, he went to the chief City office of the company that owned the *Kangaroo*, and asked for tidings of the vessel. There he simply heard the same news: it was feared that the vessel had been burnt, but no certain intelligence had reached them.

On his return he called at the school; the children were at their lessons, and Lizzie and Minnie were busy at their work.

After a few remarks on various subjects, he asked Minnie if she had had any message from the sea.

'None,' said the little Dame, laughing; 'none, Father, since the last letter which I showed you. But I'm sure Tom's all right. Our Lady will look after him and the good Doctor.'

Father Ely changed the subject of conversation, and did not even hint at the news gathered from the morning paper.

He sat down and gave an instruction to the children on 'Omens, Dreams, and such-like Fooleries.' When he had finished and was about to leave, Lizzie asked if she might say a word to him.

'What is it, my child?' he asked, taking her aside.

'You have just told us that we must not believe in dreams; but last night I had such a strange dream that I made up my mind to tell you. It will bother me if I don't. May I tell you?'

'You must not trouble about these things, child. As it is the first time these things have bothered you, perhaps it will be best to mention it and think no more about it.'

'I dreamt all night long of my mother. She seemed sad and in pain. I was trying to comfort her, but she turned her face away from me, and I got very sad. Then she looked at me, but the figure had all at once changed, and I was looking at myself! But I seemed to have grown older, and looked so sad in my dream, and tears were in my

eyes as I looked at myself. I thought how strange it was that I should see an image of myself which did not seem to be myself. Then I awoke crying. It was daylight ; I went to the glass and looked, and I was almost frightened, for there I saw the very image and the troubled look of what I'd seen on myself in my dream. Do people often dream that they see themselves, Father ?

‘ You must pay no heed to such matters, except to pray for the dead. I will say Mass, and you must pray hard for your mother’s soul. Sometimes these things are indications from the unseen world that the departed are in need of our prayers. Good-bye, dear child ; and God bless you !’

‘ God bless you, Father !’ answered the child.

With a blessing for all his little ones, the Priest returned home. His mind was agitated. The reappearance of the red-haired lady—the startling news about the vessel—the child’s dream—almost unnerved him.

He sat down in his easy-chair and took up his Breviary.

‘ Thank God,’ he said to himself, ‘ I am not superstitious ; if I were, I should feel quite uncomfortable.’

Making the Sign of the Cross, he composed his thoughts, opened his Office book, and in a few minutes had raised himself to a brighter and a happier land, and his mind was following the saints to the home of peace, where sorrows and troubles never come.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

WE have to transport our readers to the genteel suburb of the great modern Babylon. Within the magic circles of its postal district, under the aristocratic letter 'W.,' lies the great Dutchland Estate. His lordship in bronze looks through his great iron gates on 'the gentility and quality' that pass under their shadow. With the big old house, and the *noblesse* that dwell around, we have nothing to do ; but we pass along the high road some distance, and with our faces westward turn to the right. Dutchland Road looks hot and uninviting on a summer's day ; there is a great sameness in the houses and their floral decorations, but the wide road looks dusty and dry in spite of the continuous efforts of 'hydrostatic vans,' and energetic vestries. In Dutchland Road dwell Mr. and Mrs. Nelson.

If anyone wants to study worldliness among the middle-classes, let him seek for the objects of study in the vicinity of the great Dutchland Estate. We venture to predict that there he will find the perfection of worldliness reduced to a science, and its practice followed with all the ardour of one of the fine arts.

Even among so-called religious people, the Sunday worship is often but part of the fashion of that

society which is at best but a bad imitation of polished ungodliness. We are far from saying that there is not much goodness, and many real Christians, in the midst of all this great centre of middle-class wordliness; but for the present we have but to deal with those who go with the crowd—not the vulgar crowd, but the well-dressed and polite crowd of genteels.

It wanted but very little to develop the innate worldliness of Effie Nelson. Even in the religious atmosphere of a Christian home—yea, even in the sacred enclosure of a Convent-school—she had always shown a taste for the fashions and ways of the world. Now that she was her own mistress, with a husband whose whole soul was bent on pleasure and ease, with a well-furnished house and a tidy little balance at the banker's—thanks to her old father's generosity—what wonder that she should do her best to follow her soul's desire.

On Sundays, either alone or with her handsome spouse, Effie rolled in her carriage to the Benedictine Church, where everything was so grand, the congregation so genteel, the music so exquisite, and no sermon intruded itself to disturb her conscience. There was even luxury in her religious duties.

It is needless to observe that the dinners at Dutchland Road were the 'perfection of dinners,' and that every little gathering of friends was managed with the utmost style, and was always

pronounced a complete success. And all this was done on £300 a year, and that wonderful little credit at the banker's.

Dear old Byrne said it couldn't last, and cautioned the young pair. They had commenced in too dashing a manner. It was all to no purpose. Willie found it simply impossible to settle down to the humdrum of quiet life, as he called it. There would be time enough later on. So he did but encourage Effie's extravagant notions in living, fashion, and dress.

One half the world certainly doesn't know how 'the other half' lives, although it guesses pretty correctly that the 'other half' lives considerably above its means, and that it is pretty sure sooner or later to come to grief. But till it does 'come to grief' the other half of the world is petted and made up to, and for the most part made a rare fuss of. For the present, at least, there was no lack of money with the Nelsons ; and they held their own in right good style.

One morning, not long after the events recounted in the last chapter, a lady presented herself and asked to see Mr. Nelson. Being informed that he was not at home, she requested to see Mrs. Nelson, if convenient, and sent up her card.

'Mrs. Nelson's compliments to the Honourable Miss Mapleson, and if she will kindly not mind waiting, she will see her in a few minutes,' was the reply.

The Honourable Laura was shown up to the drawing-room.

How had she come there ? In this wise. ‘

We left her last peacefully slumbering in Biarritz. Her plans had been formed. She followed May and Lizzie to Paris, and on to London. They little suspected who was in the same train with them. She had preceded them by boat, and awaited their arrival.

She found out their address by telling the cabman whom she engaged to follow at a respectable distance the vehicle which conveyed them to Great Burley Street. She had then alighted, and marking the house and noting the number, she said to herself, ‘ No. 25, Great Burley Street. And George said that he lived in Bower Street. Too close—too close. He must not be allowed to return, under any circumstances, to this quarter !’

She then bent her steps to Bower Street, out of a simple curiosity to find out a little more about the neighbourhood. She passed and repassed the house, and at length ascended the steps and knocked. A venerable female answered the door. Laura inquired for Dr. Spence, but was informed that he had left some time ago, and that they did not know his address.

‘ Was there anyone of whom she might inquire ?’

She could not say, but she would ask.

Lady Laura was eventually informed where Mr. Nelson, who had formerly shared the apart-

ments with Mr. Spence, was living at that time, and that probably there she might gain some tidings of the absent Doctor. She consequently, in due time, betook herself to Dutchland Road.

Laura was not sorry that Mr. Nelson was not in. When she found herself alone with Effie, she saw before her a woman whom a little flattery would make an easy tool in her hands. The self-conceited young married lady was only too glad to number among her friends and guests an 'Honourable' Miss, or Mrs. She received Miss Mapleson with great warmth and much demonstration; assured her that her dear Willie would only be too happy to meet George's cousin. She could give her no definite information about Dr. Spence or his whereabouts, but was sure that Willie would let her know all he could.

'Are you staying any length of time in London, Miss Mapleson?' asked Mrs. Nelson.

'My movements are somewhat unsettled, I confess,' replied Laura, with a most open frankness of manner which charmed her hearer, 'but by your kind permission I will call again. When should I have an opportunity of finding your husband at home?'

Effie did not wish to lose the opportunity, so she said at once: 'To-morrow we have a few friends to a little family dinner. Will you come and join us? You will be sure then to find us all at home.'

Laura accepted the invitation. Effie was de-

lighted. After many passing compliments and pleasing flatteries, the newly-made acquaintance departed, congratulating herself on her success.

‘It was indeed a happy thought which led me to make inquiries at George’s old lodgings,’ she said to herself. She little dreamt of what it would lead to on the morrow.

Mrs. Nelson had invited a few friends to this little dinner, and amongst them were May and Lizzie. It was the first time the latter had ever been in what is termed ‘Society.’ She had begged hard of May to be let off, but May was not to be disappointed. Violet too urged her to accept her sister’s invitation.

‘Oh ! do come, Lizzie darling,’ said May. ‘See what a pressing invitation it is ! You have never been to see her, although she has so often asked you ! If you don’t go, I shan’t !’

That last word settled the matter. To tell the honest truth, Mrs. Nelson didn’t really want Miss Mount ; and had only asked her out of compliment to May. She would not have lost the friendship of Miss Cumberland for a great deal.

Lizzie consented to go, much to May’s and Vi’s delight ; but she insisted that she should not be asked again.

When our two young friends arrived at Dutchland Road, they found most of the guests had arrived. There were our old friends Captain and Mrs. Jackson, and Mr. and Mrs. Cummings. You see, kind

reader, as we have before observed, the Cummings were decidedly vulgar people, and as such the Nelsons would willingly have dispensed with their company. But they were old friends of the Byrnes. Moreover, there was another grave consideration. Mr. and Mrs. C. had lots of money, lived in great style, gave gorgeous parties and superb dinners, and were well patronised by a large and admiring circle of acquaintances. It was great policy therefore to keep in with such people. Of course Ma and Pa Byrne and sister Vi were present, as was also Mr. Flopson, the junior member of the important firm in which Nelson was engaged, and whom we have already introduced to our readers. There was also present Mr. Fitzjenkyns of the Stock Exchange, a bachelor who was prodigiously well-to-do, and always went down to Birdlandshire for the shooting, and was partner with young Noodle of the Royal Green Guards. Fitzjenkyns's name was exceedingly good on 'Change. He was a generous-hearted fellow, fairly good-looking, and about forty years of age. We are not sure whether Mrs. Nelson had not made up her mind, as had at least a score of other married ladies, young and old, that her high vocation was to find a suitable wife for this wealthy commoner. The married women of the middle-classes are wonderfully self-sacrificing and energetic in this respect. The unmarried ladies ought to be indeed grateful; we doubt whether they are, but then perhaps they are not so unselfish as their married

friends, and don't know their own interests so well. Yet they are convinced they know best ; perchance they do ; we must confess that the question is a puzzle to us. We remember on one occasion meriting the just ire of a good *materfamilias* who had taken compassion on our loneliness, and invited us to meet a few of her friends at the social board. We were placed at the left hand of mine hostess, and next to us was a young lady who had been marked out as a fitting companion through life for an elegant young gentleman of vast abilities and good fortune, and who was of course placed next to the lady in question. We saw at once, and so did the young lady, through the whole conspiracy. The dinner was not a success from the hostess's point of view. 'Mine hostess' failed in her attempt. The young lady in question kept up a brilliant conversation with the wrong party, and the young gentleman of vast abilities and good fortune ate his meal in comparative solitude and silence. We were lectured severely afterwards, and told that we had entirely frustrated the whole design which had prompted *materfamilias* to give her little dinner. We could only plead our youth and ignorance in defence of our breach of the etiquette of self-constituted genteel society. We have grown older, and we hope wiser ; but we are afraid, that even with our advanced age and knowledge, under precisely the same circumstances we should do precisely what we did some ten years ago !

Two other persons were present when our young friends arrived ; to them also they were introduced. Mr. Pink, a son of the junior member of the firm of Pink, Moneyboy and Pink, bankers, and his sister Miss Rose Pink. Mr. P. was about emerging from his teens, and Miss Rose was a year or two older. Miss Rose was a fussy little body with somewhat prominent front teeth, who talked much, and, for a young lady of her age, rather loudly. Her brother was a timid young man with very little to say for himself, and who generally agreed with what everybody said ; which was, no doubt, highly delightful, but sometimes a little confusing, especially for himself. His ordinary remark was, 'Oh ! yes, yes, yes, decidedly.'

The introductions had nearly finished when the door was swung open and the Honourable Laura Mapleson was announced.

The announcement seemingly had the desired effect. All were very much surprised. Effie had meant it as a surprise, so she was quite gratified. Fitzjenkyns adjusted his binoculars and gazed at the apparition in the highest fashion and red hair. Flopson was simply aghast ! and poor young Pink felt that he had called at the wrong house. The Captain was grandiloquent : and Mr. Cummings inflated his shirt-front and became verbose. Old Byrne was delighted, and of course the ladies were charmed to meet the Honourable Miss Mapleson.

When Lizzie and Laura first gazed at each other

a look of blank amazement was on their faces ; but the woman of the world soon recovered herself, and advancing towards May and Lizzie, with a hand out to each she said :

‘This is an unlooked-for pleasure ! Of all the world I little thought of meeting my two good friends here to-night ! You are astonished to see me. An unexpected event caused me to hasten back to London, and a wondrous and unlooked-for good fortune has brought me here to-night.’

During this little speech Mrs. Nelson looked on in utter astonishment. She then turned to Laura and said :

‘Oh ! I did not know that you knew Miss Cumberland and Miss Mount. But, how very stupid of me ! of course you must be well acquainted with them, as they are such particular friends of your cousin, Dr. Spence.’

As Effie uttered these words, Lizzie looked steadfastly into Laura’s face. It was pale and somewhat convulsed ; the eyes glared with a strange light—a look as of intense hatred—then a smile settled upon the mouth, but it was more of a sneer than a smile, and gave for an instant a peculiar feline look to the countenance of the honourable lady. All this was but the work of an instant ; she looked again, and the face wore its old cold and unreadable expression. Not so May. She turned white and red by degrees, and shook from head to foot. A strange tremor seemed to possess her ; she was quite unnerved. An awful conflict was passing in her mind.

‘I am afraid Miss Cumberland is not very well,’ said Laura, who observed the change that had come over May.

With a great effort May recovered her self-possession and assured her friends that it was nothing ; and soon the conversation was quite as lively and brisk as it generally is in an assembly waiting to be fed.

‘I am glad you know my cousin George ; he is a generous good-hearted fellow,’ said Laura, ‘but an awful wanderer. He might be King of the Gipsies, he has such strange ways. He is given too much to sentimental interest in the lower orders. I think he must have spent a fortune on the vulgar poor. I was with him a short while ago, in Ireland, and he was never happy unless he was amongst them. And now he has run away again all the way to Australia. Finding out that Mr. Nelson was a very great friend of George’s, I’ve introduced myself that I might learn some tidings of the runaway.’

‘No,’ said Willie, ‘I’ve no tidings whatever. I don’t even know whether he knows of my marriage since my return from India. We’ve been playing hide-and-seek together.’

The bell rang for dinner. The guests descended. The usual formalities were observed, and the repast proceeded. The Honourable Laura was chatty and gracious, and condescended to patronise the inflexible Flopson. Fitzjenkyns was between Lizzie and May, and divided his attentions between our young

friends. May was painfully silent and thoughtful ; she eat but little. Her mind was ill at ease. George had been in Ireland with his cousin ; she knew all about him, and he had not even once mentioned her name or hinted at her existence. ‘But then,’ she argued to herself, ‘he never speaks of his relatives or of his own concerns ; why should I let this trouble me ?’ Ah ! why ? Gentle reader, can you guess ? Did fair May Cumberland fear that this woman would——, well ! let us say—rob her of the friendship of one whom she so greatly esteemed ?

The dinner was over, and the gentlemen rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room. Effie rattled off a few of her favourite pieces, and sang a song or two with great applause, others followed with more or less success. Miss Rose Pink sang some difficult music in a very weak and strained manner. Lady Laura turned to Lizzie and said, ‘And will not Miss Mount kindly favour us ?’

‘I have no music——’

May said, ‘Lizzie, never mind the music; they’ll excuse you. Sing us those beautiful words of Longfellow’s, for which Dr. Spence composed you that pretty tune, which he gave you before leaving for Ireland. He said the tune had been suggested by music he had heard ; he forgot when and where.’

The Honourable Miss Mapleson and the company listened attentively as the dark-haired maiden ,

passing her fingers lightly over the keys, began in a low and mournful strain :

“ Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
‘ Life is but an empty dream !’
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem !”

Then the music quickened and became more pathetic, or more energetic as the words demanded :

“ Life is real ! Life is earnest !
And the grave is not its goal :
‘ Dust thou art, to dust returnest,’
Was not spoken of the soul.

“ Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way ;
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day !

“ Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate,
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.”

As she progressed in her song, she seemed to forget the presence of strangers, and threw all the energy of her heart's feelings into the words. Her powerful, rich, strong voice, without strain or effort, gave wonderful expression to the simple words of the song, and thrilled the hearers with a feeling almost akin to religious awe. She had finished her song and returned to her seat before the surprise of her audience had given them time to realise that the song was ended, and then in an unfeigned way they congratulated and thanked her.

Lady Laura never forgot that evening and that song.

At length the hour came for the guests to depart.

A carriage was waiting to convey the Honourable Laura Mapleson to her destination. As she proceeded to her hotel she mused thus with herself :

‘So, so, Miss May is in love with my cousin George, that’s plain. But he is evidently smitten with the pale-faced girl ; else why did he write her the song ? They have met, and he has kept the knowledge from me. No wonder he was so anxious to seek her whom he will never find. But why, I wonder, does she not wear the ring I gave her ? This means something. I must find out. How she threw her soul into that song ; yet she doesn’t seem a girl of much sentiment. “Learn to labour and to wait ;” well, well, I’ve laboured and waited long enough. The burden of my song is, “learn to love and then to hate !” Oh, George, George ! if you had but made me yours, how much misery, how many heart-burnings would have been saved ! I can only love or hate ! They are still at my mercy ; still in my hands. After all, the secret is mine, not his ; and when a woman keeps her own counsel, a man is no match for her !’

She threw herself back in her carriage in a satisfied and defiant manner.

Laura Mapleson’s was not the only mind that was troubled by that unexpected meeting. When May reached her home and her own room, she gave vent to her feelings in a burst of tears. Lizzie

threw her arms round her neck, kissed her, and said tenderly :

‘May darling, tell me ; what is the matter ?’

‘I never felt so miserable in all my life. What a wretched night this has been ! Oh, Lizzie, I am so unhappy ! You remember all we thought about that woman when we first met her. I’m afraid that George’s—the Doctor’s cousin has some terrible influence over him, and that he is somehow at her mercy, in her power.’

‘God forbid !’ said her young friend.

‘Oh that I could only see him and ask him to dispel all the terrible fears that are crowding upon me, and crushing my heart !’

‘Wait—be patient and pray, darling. Remember all things come round to those that will but wait and pray.’

‘Would that I had your patient trust, and your beautiful self-control ! Pray for me, dearest. Oh, you will never, never leave me, will you, come what may ?’

‘Why should I ? Don’t I owe all to you ? Darling, we will be true in our love for each other in life, in death, and I trust for ever.’

‘God bless you ! I’m happier now, dearest.’

May kissed her friend, and bade her good-night.

‘Good-night, darling,’ said Lizzie, returning May’s caresses.

‘God bless you, and keep you ! We will pray for each other.’

While May was passing a restless night of anxious and feverish dreams, Lizzie was sleeping the dreamless sleep of undisturbed innocence and peace. She rose before daybreak perfectly refreshed, and after an hour's prayer and meditation stole down noiselessly to May's room.

CHAPTER XV.

SAVED !

S EVEN months had passed since the eventful evening on which May and Lizzie had met the Honourable Laura Mapleson at Mrs. Nelson's. The beautiful month of May had come round once more with its flowers, its sunshine, and its brightness. With the bright month had come the return of a wanderer. George Spence had returned to England.

It was like the old times, that bright May afternoon in the dear old home in Great Burley Street. Lizzie and May were talking with the Doctor of all that had happened since their parting a year ago. He looked more careworn than ever ; and the hardships of his perilous voyage had bronzed his features, and the hair looked whiter—with a more silky whiteness than before.

The seven months that had passed since the two

friends had learnt the relationship of George and Laura, had been months of great anxiety. They longed to see the Doctor once more, and to tell him all, and get reassured about his safety.

The news of the shipwreck had reached Minnie Redmond, as Father Ely feared it would. For weeks there had been a cruel suspense about the fate of the crew and the passengers of the good ship *Kangaroo*. At last the good and glad tidings of the safety of all reached England, then came letters from George and Tom confirming the welcome tidings. Tom had written home a long letter to his little Dame Trot, and had given a graphic account of the burning of the steamer and of the adventures in search of the little boy, of their escape almost miraculously from fire and water, and their adventures and sufferings afterwards. At length the two friends had the good fortune to arrive at their destination in Australia.

Tom was still busily engaged in the colony, working hard and promoting the interests of the house that had sent him out. George and Tom had for some time parted company. The Doctor had made all inquiries after the object of his search ; he communicated with the police and other authorities ; he wandered about from place to place, all to no avail ; and so at length, weary and careworn, he determined to return to his native land. The object of his journey he kept to himself, and as Tom was too much engaged in the business of the house that

he represented he saw little of the Doctor after their landing.

‘Doctor,’ said Lizzie, looking straight at the careworn face, ‘we have prayed day and night for your safety ; and you can scarcely tell how grateful we feel to God that you are back again with us.’ She continued with artless simplicity : ‘We have missed you so much, and have felt so lonely since you’ve been away ; haven’t we, May ?’

Poor May’s heart was too full to say much. Her face had grown almost as pale as Lizzie’s, and her health had visibly suffered by the continual anxiety of her thoughts. She had not the beautiful resignation and confiding trust in Providence of her young friend ; but she had struggled hard against her feelings, prayed and hoped for the best. The conflict had been a hard one, and had told upon her. She had much to say, much to ask, and yet she could scarcely summon up courage to begin. The last few months seemed like an ugly dream.

Men are sometimes very stupidly insensible to that which one would think would strike them at once as very obvious. It was so with the Doctor. He did not seem to perceive the effect of his return upon May. The one great object of his life was again frustrated—the phantom had again disappeared—and all else seemed to have but little effect upon him. As he gazed on the pale-faced, dark-haired maiden before him, and heard how she had missed his presence, for a moment he was lost

to all consciousness of those present in the seeming realisation of the dream of his life. The voice and the features were more striking than ever, the earnest way was more like that of the lost one ; he could scarcely realise that all was not a dream, or that the object of his search had not been found. What wonder then that he did not heed the last words of the dark-haired maiden, and their effect upon her fair friend ?

‘Tom wrote and told Minnie about your interest in a little boy on board, and that through him you both of you almost lost your lives ; tell us about it, for we have a lot of news for you when you’ve finished the history of your adventures,’ said Lizzie.’

‘Well, first of all,’ said George, ‘I must tell you who this little child was ; and something about his parents.’

The Doctor then related the facts we have already told our readers.

‘When we were stepping into the boat, we saw Mrs. Atwell in another boat at some little distance from us ; she was calling out wildly for us to return and save her son. There wasn’t time for reflection. Back we went, but to no purpose ; we could not reach the portion of the vessel where we supposed the poor child was. We had to return, and had only just cleared the vessel when she went down. Fortunately for us, the boats were not a long distance off, and they returned ; after some time we were picked up, and thus, by the kind mercy of

God, preserved from a watery grave. The little boy Willie Atwell, for whom we risked our lives, turned out to be in no danger after all. The husband and wife got separated in the confusion of the rush to the boats, and the little fellow was all the while safe with his father in another boat. After we had been picked up, and eventually transferred to another vessel on its way to Australia, the dear little fellow died. That child's death made an impression on me which I trust will last for ever. I shall never forget it. The sun was going down, and I was summoned to the little boy; he was calling me. We were great friends in our own way. He had taught me more than I had learnt in a lifetime. He made me realise the truth of Christianity, and the beauty of the Catholic Church—for little Willie was a Catholic—he taught me how to pray !

‘Oh, thank God and His blessed Mother !’ broke in Lizzie. ‘May, darling, how our prayers are being answered.’

The Doctor smiled sadly, and continued : ‘When I got to his side, the little fellow put out his thin white hand and said, “Doctor, mother told me the other day that you went back into the ship to try and find me, when that big fire burnt it up. I have been asking God to let me take you, Doctor, out of the big fire that will come when the world is burnt up at the last day. I thought I saw you in a big sea of fire, tossing up and down like the waves of the beautiful ocean; and I was flying over it with

large white wings—like the birds we used to see when I was well on deck—and I put out my hand to draw you up to me—and—and—then I saw you here—and you——’ The Doctor was visibly moved, he wiped the heavy beads of perspiration from his forehead ; the day was not hot, but an oppressive feeling seemed to weigh upon him. He continued : ‘ I was holding the boy’s hand in mine. He raised himself in bed and flung his left arm round my neck and kissed me. “ God bless you,” he said, “ and you’ll always love me, won’t you ? and when I go to heaven, where all my little sisters are, with Jesus and Mary, oh, I will love you still, and mother and father. Look,” said the boy, with a strange expression of wonder in his face, “ look, don’t you see how bright and white she is ? Oh, how beautiful !” and he took his hands away and clasped them, and saying the *Hail Mary*, fell back in my arms—dead !’

There was a pause in the conversation. May and Lizzie were as much moved as the Doctor himself. After a while he continued :

‘ No one can ever know how I missed that child. I felt once more how weary I was, how lonely ; but then I had learnt something which I never knew before. *He* had taught it me—that little child apostle. I had learnt to believe in the power, the presence and the providence of the unseen God ; more than that, I had learnt to pray. Oh, Lizzie, I often think now how much pained you must have been when I told you that I could not promise you

to pray ! You and May have, I know, prayed earnestly for me. God has led me in His own wondrous ways. I have learnt not only to believe in Him but in that miracle of His creation, the Catholic Church. It could not be otherwise, the holy death of that child with his full realisation of the great unseen ; the steady resignation of his Catholic mother ; the good life and winning ways of dear Tom Burke—whom I have grown to love as a brother—were more convincing than a library of controversial books. But,’ he added, ‘I must never forget where and when I first learnt the beauty of the practice of the Catholic truth ; though my eyes were sealed, and I did not see then as I do now.’

George Spence looked earnestly at Lizzie as he said these last words ; in fact the greater portion of his conversation was directed to her.

‘You do not know, Doctor,’ said Lizzie, ‘how much you have been in our thoughts, and how often May and I have prayed for your conversion and your welfare.’

‘May God bless and reward you both ! but tell me some of the news you have in store for me.’

‘May will do that, Doctor,’ said Lizzie, laughing ; ‘for we’ve had our adventures, I can tell you : but make her begin at the beginning.’

So May told the story of their visit to Lourdes, and when it came to the part about Lizzie’s illness, the pale-faced maiden supplemented the narrative with her own praises of May and the Peglers.

Then came the history of Mrs. Kemp's conversion, and of their adventures at Biarritz.

'And there we met your cousin, the Honourable Laura Mapleson !'

'Good heavens !' exclaimed George Spence. But he speedily recovered himself, and added in a more collected manner, 'Pray excuse me, but I will explain myself some day. My cousin Laura and I have known each other since we were little children together. It seems so strange that you should have met her. Some day, perhaps, you will know how much our two lives have been mixed up together ; but tell me all about her—when, how often, and where have you seen her ?'

May and Lizzie then told him all as we have faithfully recorded in this faithful history. They did not forget to tell him of her appearance at the Nelsons' and the scene that followed.

'But,' said Lizzie, 'May has left out one fact ; Miss Mapleson, when we were at Biarritz, before she left us, made me a little present. She said I reminded her of a happy past, and that she felt interested in me, and she gave me a ring and asked me to keep it for her sake.'

'What kind of ring ?' asked the Doctor, looking at Lizzie's hand and seeing there only her gold rosary ring.

'I will run and fetch it,' said Lizzie.

While she was gone, May looked hard at the Doctor, who was rapt for a few moments in one

of his fits of vacancy, and said : ‘ Doctor, what is all this strange mystery ? I can’t help asking you ; you will forgive me if I seem bold or forward. Why is it that you and your cousin are so struck with Lizzie ? Why have you never told us about your cousin ? What has been the reason of your long absence ? surely if you can tell us you will ? Why——’

But she could not finish her sentence ; Lizzie opened the door and entered.

‘ There,’ she said, ‘ there it is—innocence, suffering, and true love, Doctor !’

George took the ring, and almost trembled as he gazed upon it ; it was the counterpart of the ring that he had recovered in Cork. He scarcely knew what to say or think. Why had she given Lizzie *that* ring ? Had she too seen the resemblance ? she surely had. But why add mystery to mystery ?

The two young friends did not fail to observe the effect the sight of the ring made upon the white-haired Doctor.

‘ Give me this ring, Lizzie,’ he said.

‘ No, Doctor, I cannot,’ she answered. ‘ I must keep it as I have accepted it, or return it to the giver.’

‘ But you do not wear it,’ he returned, gazing at her hand, on which was the neat rosary ring.

‘ I did *not* promise to wear it ; but I accepted it, and I cannot give it away.’

‘ Well,’ said George sadly, giving back the ring,

‘do not wear it ; but,’ he added, ‘let me look once more at that ring.’

Lizzie handed it back to him. He examined it closely ; it was a plain band of gold containing one pearl set in rubies ; he looked on the inside, and it seemed as though some word had been carefully erased, but there were still the traces of the first letter—a capital B. His lips compressed, and his face grew pale ; he handed it to Lizzie, and asked in a trembling voice : ‘Did you observe anything like an erased word on the inside of the ring ?’

‘No ; I have never looked,’ said the pale-faced girl ; and she and May took the ring to the window, and after looking for some time May said :

‘It looks as if some word had been engraved beginning with B, and then erased.’

‘I thought so myself,’ said George. ‘Now whatever you do, don’t lose that ring. More depends upon that than you can possibly imagine. It is a most wonderful discovery. I must leave town to-night, and shall return the day after to-morrow. And now,’ he said, turning to Lizzie, ‘I must say good-bye, and God bless you. You will not fail to pray for me. As soon as I have settled some very important matters you must get me instructed in the Catholic Faith, and then I doubt not that I shall be happier than I have ever been. You won’t mind leaving me a little while with Miss May ; I have a word to say to her alone.’

Lizzie wondered, extended her hands, bade the

Doctor good-bye, and withdrew. She was rather surprised to be asked to leave him alone with her friend ; he had never made such a request before. May had almost invariably seen him in her presence.

When they were alone he said :

‘ Miss May, I don’t wonder at your noticing that there is a mystery about my life. You have asked me to tell you all I can about my long absence. Well, it is a long history and a painful one. I will tell it to you, but to the dear child who has just left us you must not utter a word, until I give you permission. I cannot tell you now, but after my return in two or three days I will call again, and you shall know why I am so mixed up with my cousin, why I am so interested in Lizzie, how it was that the ring she produced so startled me, and why altogether I am such a wandering, unsettled, mysterious, good-for-nothing kind of a fellow.’

‘ Do not say that, Doctor—because you have done much good, and many love you very dearly. May God bless you, and spare you !’

‘ From my heart I thank you, dear Miss Cumberland, for all your kindness to me and to the child in whom I take so deep an interest.’

With these words he rose and departed.

May’s heart was full.

‘ Oh that I knew that he cared for me, if it were only a little ! but he is so cold, so strange ; even after all this time, all the love he seems to have is for her, and not for me.’

The fair-haired maiden threw herself upon the sofa and wept.

Shortly afterwards Lizzie found her friend still in tears.

‘What’s the matter, darling?’ she asked, in her simplicity. ‘Tell me, dearest sister; if anything troubles you, let me share your sorrow!’

‘I may not tell you now. Another day. Promise me, Lizzie, that you won’t say that you found me crying now. I always feel happier when you are near. Come, let us be off to church and tell our dear Lady all our wants and sorrows.’

CHAPTER XVI.

A SICK CALL.

HATHER AMBROSE ELY was seated at his desk. He had just taken up his pen and opened a letter before him, which he was about to answer. His plan when he answered a letter was to read it over carefully, and then place it in front of him and answer it paragraph for paragraph; that is to say if the letter would bear such critical answering. It often happened that the letters he had to answer were written in a longrambling strain, and simply took up several pages to ask a simple question, which might be disposed of by a mono-

syllable. The one before him was not of this nature ; it was written in a neat compact hand, and was from Tom Burke in Australia. Several times the good Father had settled himself at his desk to answer the letter, but had been interrupted. And so for the last three days it had progressed no farther than the address and 'My dear boy.' No one knows the difficulty of letter-writing more than a Priest, and few Priests more than Father Ely. His spare time, or 'free time,' as he called it, was about the most interrupted period of his existence. He had no sooner begun to collect his thoughts than there would be no end of interruptions. And so it proved on this occasion.

The gas-man called to see about the escape in the church, and the sacristan could not find out where it was ; he was sorry he had forgotten, but would his Reverence kindly come down and show the gas-fitter what he was to do ? Then Margaret reminded him that the boiler leaked, and as the man was on the premises wouldn't it be better to have it seen to, and the lock on the area gate, and the bell-pull in the spare bedroom ? Messrs. Burnam and Wire's man had no sooner been disposed of than Hodd and Mortair's man came about the little bill for the alterations to the schools. Then came the head schoolmistress to say that a cat had fallen through the skylight in the class-room, and that the water-tap had been broken ; would he give orders to have the repairs done at once ? and would Father Ely

also please write for some more slates, which she had forgotten to enclose in the order she handed him the day before yesterday ?

‘And,’ added Margaret, as she held the door in her hand, ‘that man from the Rookery has come again about his boy that has been playing the truant from school ; and Mrs. Flaherty’s little girl has come for the order for the clothes you promised her this morning.’

‘All right, child ; I’ll see to them in a minute.’

‘God help his Reverence,’ muttered the good housekeeper to herself ; ‘they don’t give him a moment’s rest. If I didn’t know that he’d be very angry I’d send them all packing about their business, and say he wasn’t at home.’

She had no sooner got to the kitchen than the street-door bell rang violently : turning to the maid she said :

‘Run, Kate, and see what it is ; and if it’s any of those cadgers, tell them to go round to the church this evening. Father Ely has been worried out of his very life all this blessed day. That bell has scarce ever left off ringing since we got up.’

But Kate went to the waiting-room after answering the door, where she found the good Priest.

‘What is it, Katie ?’

‘A sick call, please, Father, to Flood’s Court.’

‘Tell the person to wait.’

Father Ely soon despatched those who were waiting. He called the messenger into the waiting-

room, and kindly inquired: 'Who is it, my child?'

'Sure, Father, it's a stranger as has come amongst us in the last few weeks. She's none of the best, I'm thinking, but she's mighty bad, and is calling loudly for the Priest; so I said I'd run round for your Reverence.'

'What's her name, and where does she live?'

'In our house, Father, top back; her name's Johanna Sheehan.'

'I will come to her at once.'

'And so,' said Father Ely, as he reached his room, and divesting himself of his cassock, prepared himself for his sick call—'And so, Tom, my boy, you must wait another day.' He folded Tom's letter and replaced it in his desk.

Flood's Court was the most unsatisfactory part of Father Ely's Mission. The people who inhabited that narrow court were of the lowest and most degraded portion of humanity. The women spent most of their time in the public-house, were continually drunk, and perpetually quarrelling and fighting amongst themselves. The men were little better; they drank, beat their wives, cursed, swore, and fought. The court was the scene of continual rows. The dirt was shocking. Heaps of rubbish and garbage in the narrow roadway emitted an intolerable stench; the houses were filthy and reeking with bad smells. How human beings could dwell therein was a wonder to the good Priest.

The children were unwashed, squalid, and ragged. Father Ely no sooner gave a child boots or clothing, than they found their way to the pawnbroker's, or dolly-shop as it was termed, and the proceeds went to the public-house. These people had almost broken the good Priest's heart. Do what he would for them, they never seemed to reform ; and although they pestered the very life out of him when they were sick, yet notwithstanding all their good resolutions, directly they got well again they were as bad as ever. All the riff-raff and scum of strange humanity seemed to drift into Flood's Court. Passing along the main thoroughfare, no one would have ever dreamt that the little archway, over which were printed the words ' Flood's Court,' led to such a den of iniquity.

When the good Priest disappeared down the archway on his mission of mercy, he found a row going on, as usual, in the court. Children were screaming, men and women were shouting and cursing. It was no sooner whispered that the Priest was there than they disappeared into their houses ; and the dark court, lit with a solitary lamp, was left to a few children, a few cats, and the filthy heaps of rubbish emitting unpleasant odours. Father Ely proceeded onward to the house where the sick woman dwelt. His presence brought peace and quiet into that abode of continual brawls and fighting. The dingy denizens appeared at their doors, and lighted him to the attic. There, on an

old mattress in the corner, he found the object of his search.

It was the old story. Early vice, misspent girlhood, dissipated womanhood, and Godless, miserable old age. And yet, in all these cases of dark and vicious neglect of religion, there was generally some one little redeeming quality ; either some good act of mercy in the past, or some little devotion persevered in even amidst the scenes of vice, or virtuous life in some member of the family, that seemed to account for the great grace of a Priest's presence in the last sickness. These mysteries of God's mercies will be made known some day, and we shall cease to wonder why these poor discarded dregs of humanity have been so highly favoured by Him Who came to redeem and to heal.

Father Ely heard her confession—she had never been since she was an innocent child in the old country, Ireland, nearly threescore years ago. Many a city in both countries had seen her since ; in her last days she had drifted to the great centre of crime—but a Providence had ruled the tide of misfortune on which she drifted. The last Sacraments were administered, and the Priest promised to send the poor woman some little nourishment on the following day. He could scarcely trust the neighbours of the dying woman. He took a little child with him and sent her back with bread, milk, and meat for a little broth for the poor old soul. To-morrow he would not fail to send early.

After his early Mass he called May Cumberland into the sacristy and told her of the new case of distress, and asked her to see after some nourishment for the poor creature. May and Lizzie returned to their breakfast, and dear old Mrs. Kemp prepared the nourishments for the sick woman. May set off with them directly after breakfast, accompanied by Lizzie, who was still teaching in the school she loved so much. All the wretched creatures in that foul and filthy court knew Miss Cumberland; they called her an angel to her face, and abused her behind her back. She was under obedience not to give alms without the express request of her spiritual guide; and even then we are quite sure both the Priest and the charitable lady were often taken in; but what then? 'Charity is kind,' and so it must be often misapplied, or otherwise why should it, to be perfect, 'think no evil?'

When the two maidens entered Mrs. Sheehan's poor room, the old woman was dozing quietly.

Lizzie leant over the old woman. She was evidently dreaming, and was muttering in her disturbed sleep. Lizzie could only catch the words, 'The ring! she gave it me; no, not the pale-faced—' and then suddenly she awoke. The sun was streaming into the room and playing round Lizzie's slight form. The old woman gazed at her for a moment and then shrieked out, 'No, no, don't touch me! I did it for money; she gave me

money! I was poor. Go away, go away! don't haunt me in this way! Oh, don't harm me! save me, save me!

May leant over the bed and said to Lizzie: 'Darling, you have evidently frightened the poor old soul; she has been dreaming—she takes you for a ghost. Just get on one side for a minute, and I'll try to quiet her.'

The old woman had buried her head in her hands, and so Lizzie, unperceived, left the rickety old attic.

'Don't be frightened, my good woman,' said May; 'I've only come from the good Priest to see you.'

The strange voice aroused the woman; she uncovered her face and looked up, saying, 'Where is she—the pale-faced, dark-haired lady? I thought I saw her; oh, I'm so glad it was only a dream!'

'Why, what have you to fear?' said May; 'see! I've brought you some little nourishment. Don't distress yourself, but take a little of this;' and the good lady tended the dying woman with all the care of an experienced nurse.

The patient was taking her nourishment when Lizzie quietly entered the room. Looking up the old woman saw her, and screamed out, clutching May tightly, 'Oh, there it is again! send it away, dear lady, send it away! Look, look! don't you see it?' May was frightened, but recovering herself she said, 'Yes, yes, I will send it away.' She got

up, whispered to Lizzie to stay outside for her, for she was almost afraid of the old woman, whom she took to be mad.

When Lizzie had gone out, and May had reassured her sick charge, she got her to take a little more nourishment, and then asked her why she was so frightened at what she had seen.

'Ah! lady,' she said, 'you'll tell of me, and I'll be punished.'

'No, no; you can trust me. No one shall harm you. Didn't the good Priest send me here to you, to help you, and to nurse you? Come, granny dear, cheer up and tell me.'

'Sure and, lady, I had right to trust the Priest's messenger. And your kind good face assures me you'll do me no hurt. Well! I'll tell you why I was so frightened just now. I've been a wicked sinner in my time—a bad girl—a worse woman—and since I grown old doing anything to get money to buy drink—the wonder is I've lived so long! About a year ago I was in the city of Cork: I used to go from place to place, pretending to tell fortunes and see things to come, God help me! When I was in Cork a fine lady with red hair, tall and commanding-looking, came to see me. She offered me money to do her a service—and then told me a tale to tell—and gave me a ring to give, so that he whom I told the tale to should believe me. Ah! many's the time I've regretted what I done then! She brought a kind-faced, white-haired gentleman

to me, and I told him the tale: I gave the ring, and——'

Looking at May she saw a look of terror on the maiden's face, and she said: 'No, no, fair lady—don't hang me; I did it for money! I didn't mean to harm the gentleman. I sought him afterwards, but he was gone—no one knew where. And she had gone too. I felt I had done very wrong. I was dreaming of it when you came in: and then I woke up and thought I saw the lady who I was to tell had given me the ring—she was so like the red-haired lady made me speak about, that I got frightened and thought it was a ghost!'

'But what kind of ring was it?' asked May.

'It was a little gold ring, lady, with a pearl and some little red stones in it.'

'And do you think you'd recognise the white-haired gentleman, if you ever saw him again?'

'Oh yes, dear lady; I'd know him anywhere!'

'Well, then,' said May, 'I'll see if I can find him, and send him to you.'

'If you do, I'll die so happy. Oh, God reward you!' said the old woman, taking May's hand. 'Come again soon. God bless you; and the heavens be your bed!'

May hurried from the room. She felt faint and sick. Lizzie did not say anything till they had got out of the court, and then she said to her companion:

'May darling, how pale and ill you look! that

old mad-woman, with her fancies, has quite made you ill. I wish I had stayed.'

'No, dearest, you did well to go.'

'Well, I won't go now,' said Lizzie. 'I shall play the truant this morning, and go back with you.'

They returned taking a walk round the squares, as May felt the fresh air doing her good.

During their walk May told Lizzie all that had happened.

'I can't make it out, darling,' said Lizzie; 'there's a wonderful mystery somewhere. I must be like *somebody*, that's certain. The Doctor—the honourable lady—the ring and the old woman—why, May, I declare it's quite like one of those wonderful stories our good Father Ely used to tell us children, when he used to leave off at the most interesting parts and say he'd tell us some more to-morrow if we were good,' she added, laughing.

They had arrived at 25, Great Burley Street. George Spence had kept his promise; he had returned to town the night before, and was waiting to see Miss May, as they found on reaching the house. May hurried to the drawing-room.

'Doctor, you have just arrived in time; there is no time to be lost. You must come with me at once,' said May; and then she told the astonished Doctor of her morning's adventure. We shall not attempt to describe George's wonder at this new and unforeseen event. He accompanied Miss May

to Flood's Court, and in a short time they were in the room with the dying old woman.

'See, granny dear,' said May, bending over the poor sufferer, 'I have brought a gentleman to see you.'

The old woman roused herself, looked hard at him, and put forth her hand, saying, 'God reward you.'

In the poor patient George recognised the 'Mrs. Brown' to whom he had been introduced by his cousin Laura in Cork.

The old woman *did* recognise the white-haired gentleman; and in feeble accents told him the real story of the ring, and begged his forgiveness.

'Now,' she said, 'I shall die happy!'

A sudden light burst upon George. He saw it all now. Laura had been practising a cruel deception. That she knew more than she had told him he did not doubt; the ring was proof of that. But how should he act?

When he left that poor abode his mind was not made up as to his future course of action.

He returned with May to Great Burley Street. After lunch Lizzie went to school; and when they were alone George told May the secret history of his early life.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

‘**M**Y dear Miss May,’ said George Spence, ‘before I commence the history of my early life, again I will ask you to promise me that not one word that I tell you shall be breathed by you to Lizzie, or to anyone else, till such time as I give you permission. This I am sure you will grant me.’

‘Most willingly. Come what will, I promise to keep all you say secret.’

‘I have never spoken to anyone of what I am about to tell you. I was always a strange creature ; at least, I think I was. My early education had a very great influence over my whole life. My parents were hard people, who made religion hateful to me ; of all days I hated the Sunday, and of all books I hated God’s Holy Word. I do not like even to think of my boyhood days ; the bare thought makes me feel unkind and bitter. Sunday was a day of cruel torture ; three times a day had I to listen to the droning tones of a lifeless service in a fusty old church, and the remainder of that day I spent in solitude, learning meaningless—at least to me—portions of the Bible. When the sunshine, and the flowers, and birds, and insects were rejoicing, and invited me to be glad, I had to sit in sombre quietude learning my unloved task.

‘I had an only sister ; I saw her but at rare intervals, as she resided with an aunt who dearly loved her. My sister Lizzie was a bright sunny girl, and I always felt happier and better when I had seen her for a few minutes. She was a couple of years older than myself. We dearly loved each other, but all through life saw but little of one another. Our aunt was an invalid, and Lizzie was her nurse, her companion. Even from my earliest years my sister was with her aunt. My parents consented to the separation, I suppose, from the idea that it would be good for the temporal welfare of my sister. Lizzie loved her aunt more than she loved her own mother.

‘When I was about fourteen I left home for a few years which I spent at a public school, where, for some reason or other, I never got on well, at least with the boys. The master was a severe puritanical man ; and all the religious boys were sneaks and cowards, and the others blackguards and scheming rascals that disgusted me. I kept my own counsel, and almost began to hate humanity as much as I hated religion. My sister’s love and affection, and her beautiful letters to me, saved me from apostasy, from humanity. I took violently to study, and as I had thrashed all the bullies in the school in turn for insulting me, they eventually left me alone to my solitude and my books. I left my public school and went to study medicine with a friend of my father’s in the great city. I soon

left him, and having secured apartments, attended the usual course of lectures at the Hospital, and prosecuted my studies with wonderful success. You see, I liked my profession, and didn't care much for any of my companions, and so all my spare time was used to the best advantage. My profession was also my religion. I loved it for its own sake, and for the sake of the poor sufferers whom I daily saw. I used to see my sister, often at this period of my life, and it was almost the brightest I had ever known—but not the brightest. Then she went abroad with her aunt, and I felt very lonely indeed.

‘About this time, when I was twenty-three years old, I used to help a very kind old doctor with his practice ; one night, I remember it so distinctly, I was descending the steps of his house, when a slight tall figure in a worn black dress, with a shawl over her head, asked me if I was the doctor, and if so would I come round and see her mother who was very ill. I accompanied her to one of those streets where the struggling middle-class, who have nearly come down to what is called poverty, live on in hope of better days, and try to make headway against the hard existence that has come upon them. I did not see her face until we came into the room. Then it was that I first saw that face which has been the haunting vision of my life. That girl's name was Bessie Turner. She was tall and slenderly built ; the handsome beauty of her intelligent face showed by its paleness how frail and weak her

constitution was. Her eyes were of piercing brown, and deeply fringed ; the lips thin, the forehead high, the hair black as a raven's wing ; but why describe her further ? for you have seen her living image in that pale-faced child we both of us love so dearly.

‘I learnt the history of that pale-faced girl from her dying mother. Two years previously her father had failed in business and soon after died, leaving her and her mother totally unprovided for. From that hour they commenced a hard struggle. Bessie was clever at her needle, and soon got a good situation at the West-end dress-making establishment. By her hard-earned wages she kept herself and her mother. You can guess the rest. That poor woman died ; so gentle, so kind-hearted was she during those few days, that I knew her almost like a son. I promised her on her dying bed that I would use what influence I could to try and lighten the lot of her orphan child. When her mother died Bessie was in her twentieth year. From that day I felt I had found some one for whom it was worth living and toiling.

‘At this time my sister was still away in the south of France with the aunt with whom she lived. For a time I kept the secret of my new-found happiness to myself. Bessie was a quiet persevering girl, very unimpassioned—at least so she seemed to me at first. She was shy and somewhat distrustful. I saw from the first that it was fruitless to expect her to receive any favour from my hands. She

still continued to toil at her hard lot. Six months after our first meeting—on my twenty-fourth birthday—I prevailed upon her to join her lot with mine, to take me till death parted us for better, for worse. We were married quietly, and I kept my marriage a profound secret from all but my sister. You will perhaps ask me why I was so anxious to keep the knowledge of my marriage a secret? The reason was this. My parents had their own ends in view, and had quite settled a marriage between myself and my cousin Laura—the Honourable Laura Mapleson. This woman was devoted in her attachment to me, but I always from a child disliked her. I had told her I could never make her my wife. She was rich, and, as I have said, devoted to me. I knew that it would have been useless to have told my parents; any knowledge of the fact would have made them at once disinheret me.

‘A month—the happiest month of my existence—had passed; the little rooms where we lived were a veritable paradise to me. Day by day I learnt to love my wife more and more. We were very happy. One evening when we were out together we met Laura Mapleson. I felt that my secret then was no longer my own, for I knew the woman I had to deal with. I wrote at once to my parents, told them the truth, and begged an interview with my father. I received in answer a short note saying that I was old enough to judge for myself, but that

as I had chosen so must I bide my lot ; as I had married a wife of my own choice, I had better keep her. I was then forbidden to see either my sister or my mother. I did not mind anything except the privation of seeing my dear sister ; the fear of bringing any sorrow upon her made me somewhat sad. For ourselves I had no fear. While I retained health and strength I did not dread poverty or aught else.

‘I soon obtained a situation as assistant to a medical man, a short distance from London. To that dear little village I took my treasure. There was one thing which greatly surprised us both. That was the conduct of my cousin Laura. Contrary to my expectations she, instead of turning upon me, and siding with my parents, did her utmost to lavish upon Bessie every kindness and attention. One day we almost quarrelled about it. “But why, George—why shouldn’t your good cousin love me for your sake ? True, I don’t love her too much, so you needn’t be jealous. But let her visit us : it may be the means of reconciling us to your parents, and then your sister can visit us—I shall know her whom you love so dearly !” That settled the matter. Laura was a constant visitor to our little country home.

‘We kept no servant ; Bessie superintended all the household work herself. It was her own wish. Ah ! Miss May, when I look back to that brief period of bright happiness, I see it was too bright

to last; and it is like a dream—a very happy dream—it passed away so quickly. We had been living in our home—our own home—about three months, when I got a letter from my sister saying that she was in England. She had been forbidden to visit us, to even speak to my wife, to even acknowledge her. Writing to her was out of the question, as all her letters were opened by my father's orders, and I knew any correspondence would bring upon her his anger.

‘My cousin Laura planned a meeting between my sister and myself, but the plan fell through, and we did not meet. The only condition that Laura placed upon me was this, that I should say nothing to Bessie of my meeting my sister, as it would be better not to do so till we had obtained our point, and got our parents’ permission. Laura told me that she was doing all she could to move my father to be reconciled to me and Bessie, and that she did not doubt but that, with the aid of my sister, all would be speedily brought about. She brought letters from my sister to me, and took back my answers. I feared her, but I trusted her—felt I had wronged her by my hard opinion of her, and did my best to make amends. I did all I could for her; sometimes for days together I would be absent on her commissions in London. She was a frequent visitor at our little home. Things went on in this way, and we had been married seven months. Bessie and my sister had never met.

'The continual anxiety and worry of bringing about a speedy reconciliation, and of getting at least permission for my sister to visit us, began to tell upon me. Bessie noticed it—asked me why I was absent so much of late, and a thousand other questions which I thought little of then, but have often remembered since. I told her she should know soon, that she must ask no questions. My heart was full of the excitement of bringing about the meeting between my sister and my wife. Laura had at last succeeded in getting permission for my sister to visit her for a few days. She would bring her down to the post town, a few miles from our village, and then I was to take my sister back to town to Laura's home, where I was to transact certain money matters for my cousin, and then return.

'I remember now how very downhearted Bessie seemed when I said "good-bye" on that eventful day. "Oh, George, George!" she said to me, "when will you settle down and make me happy like we were in the beginning?" I wanted to keep it all to myself in order to give her a great unlooked-for surprise. "Shall I stay now?" I asked. "No," she said, looking in my face; "you will be much disappointed unless you go." I kissed her and said good-bye. I was thinking of the pleasant surprise I should, I hoped, soon give her. "Oh, George, George! God knows I trust you!" she said. "Good-bye; God bless you!"

‘As I journeyed on that day, for the first time a terrible thought flashed across my mind. It was evident that Bessie was jealous! I felt uneasy, and almost made up my mind to return, and then almost hated myself for even thinking that Bessie could for a moment mistrust me. I met my dear sister, and in the new-found consolation of her presence, told her of all my hopes and happiness. She had for me the pleasing news that my father, with whom she was staying with her aunt, had spoken kindly of me, and that if I would only rest patiently I should certainly gain the great object for which I was waiting. She told me that she saw me then with my father’s permission, but that she was not to visit my wife. “Wait, George,” she said, “and it will all be for the best. Next time I come, I trust to see my darling sister Bessie, whom I know I shall love dearly for your sake.” On the third day of my absence I received a message from my cousin Laura bidding me to return without delay: she had called to see Bessie, but no one was at home; she was anxious, and would wait my arrival in the village. It was a dreary, soaking wet day, that day of my return. We effected an entry into the little house, and on the table was a letter addressed to me. I tore it open; I have kept it ever since; that is the letter.’

The Doctor handed May a worn letter; his hands trembled as he did so.

May read as follows:

'I have long struggled against the bitter thoughts that have been in my mind, and have refused to believe them. To-day I have seen with my own eyes. I followed you unobserved, and beheld your meeting. Though false and faithless to me, I forgive you. You will not care to seek me : even if you did it would be in vain. We part for ever in this world. We part for better, *not* for worse.

'Your broken-hearted and still faithful wife,
'BESSIE.'

May's eyes filled with tears as she read the letter ; she returned it saying, 'Poor Doctor ! What a sorrow-laden life yours has been !'

'Poor Bessie !' answered George ; 'what must *her* life have been ! I no sooner read that letter than I rushed from the house like one mad. It was pouring with rain ; I went hither and thither, making all inquiries, but all to no purpose. I returned, I know not how ; my head and frame burning as with a raging heat. The next morning I was prostrate with the burning fever that had seized me ; weeks passed, and I knew nothing of them. When I had battled through the worst, my unsettled brain and my anxiety brought on a relapse, and I journeyed even to the gate of death. Slowly, very slowly, I recovered. Two long weary months went by before I was able to leave my sick room. Those months had wrought an awful change in me. My hair, which was dark, and

without a single line of grey in it, was white as you see it now. I went with my sister and Laura to the seaside, and gradually grew strong again. My cousin had, in turns with my sister, nursed me through all that dreary time ; her care, her kindness and self-sacrificing attention were unremitting. How could I ever sufficiently repay her ? At all events one good had come out of the evil—my sickness had reconciled me to my parents. My only consolation during those long days of recovery was the assurance of my cousin that she was doing

all to trace the runaway—to gain some information of my beloved Bessie. So far, it had been all to no effect. When I grew strong enough I set out on my own search, seeking for the lost treasure of my life. My cousin aided me. Not eleven months married and my happiness lost, my new-found joy gone. The anniversary of my marriage day came, and still no tidings. From town to town I wandered ; the slightest probability of success urged me on. In the haunts of poverty and misery I searched. I have spent days and nights wandering up and down the highways and byways of London. Every lifeless body of every poor unfortunate that the dark waters of the cruel river washed up I visited, hoping at least to find her, if not among the living, at least among the dead ! For over seventeen years I have searched, but still I have no positive assurance that she is living or dead. America, Australia, India, and the Colonies

have seen me pursuing the same useless search. I have travelled on board great emigrant steamers ; for a time I took service in the navy ; I have volunteered my services in foreign countries in time of war ; I have served the sick in hospital, all to try to divert my mind from the one useless object. But the desire to find my lost wife—the treasure of my life—came back so strongly that I was powerless to resist. In an interval of quiet repose I gave my services to a poor dispensary in the crowded neighbourhood where, on the eventful night, the night on which I first met you, I saw at the bedside of a sick old man the living image of my lost wife ! Do you wonder now that I have learnt to love that child as tenderly, dearly, with, I may call it, an almost sacred love, because of the likeness that I see in her to the long-lost loved one ! Oh, Miss May, at times I have almost felt that there was something stronger than mere affection that bound that child to me. I have sometimes thought—but why trouble you with my thoughts ? I have no proof. Oh that I knew whether Bessie were alive or dead !

The Doctor buried his head in his hands, and after a short silence he continued, as May was about to speak :

‘ You would know something about my sister and my parents. They are all dead. My sister died after a short illness while I was abroad on one of my fruitless errands. Mother and father followed

each other, within a few months, to their graves. My only relative alive is Laura Mapleson—Laura, whom, up to a few days ago, I trusted—in whose self-sacrificing affection I believed. Can it be that she has been all along deceiving me—leading me away from and not to the object of my long search? Oh, how cruel and relentless is a woman's hatred, when hatred is born of jealous love!" said George bitterly.

"But where is she now?" asked May.

"I know not. I have been trying to find out. No one knows. She has left London and gone no one knows where. And then there comes the terrible revelation concerning that ring—even this very morning—and the mystery of the second ring."

George took from his pocket, carefully folded up, the ring he had received in Cork, and handed it to May. She saw the exact counterpart of the ring in Lizzie's possession—the word 'Bessie' was engraven in the inside.

"Ah! it was a cruel trick to play upon me; a wicked thing to do. God forgive her! I see it all now. The ring that is in Lizzie's keeping is evidently *the* ring I gave Bessie. It was my first present to her. She promised to wear it always. "Even if you are false to me, still I will keep it; but if I ever cease to be true to you, or to love you as I do now, I will return it;" such were Bessie's words when I gave it to her. She is either dead

or—— No ; I will *not* believe it ! If she is not dead, that ring was obtained by fraud. Laura got that ring, had the counterpart made and the name inscribed, and gave it to the old woman simply to prolong my misery. Then she met Lizzie ; her heart was touched, and she gave her *the* ring, perhaps because of the likeness—perhaps——but who can read a wicked woman's heart ? On the ring given to Lizzie you will find the name has been erased ; *why*, she, my cousin, only knows. If I could only find now where Laura Mapleson is, I would try to fathom at once the mystery of this cruel deception, for such I am now sure has been her conduct. What shall I do ? What can I do ?

‘Lizzie has always one counsel for all those kind of things,’ said May, much moved, ‘and it is to wait and pray. All things, she says, come round to those that will but pray and wait !’

‘And now,’ said the Doctor, as he rose to go, ‘I have told you all. Your sympathy and your kind assistance, as far as it can be given, I know I shall have. From my heart I again thank you for all the goodness and kindness you have shown to the living image of that one woman who holds, alive or dead, the highest place in my heart's affections. I must wait patiently, as you advise, and trust to Providence to remove the cloud that envelops me. It will be raised in His good time, doubtless. Some good at least has come out of all this sorrowful life : it has led me to the knowledge of God and His

truth. If He has taken away the love of a wife, and of a sister——'

'Oh, do not say that!' said May, in a faltering voice, unable to restrain her feelings any longer. 'At least you will let *me* love you with a sister's love, for *her* sake who is dead—and for *her* sake who is lost!'

'God bless you!' said George; 'and if the brotherly affection of such a heart as mine, if the care of a wasted life like mine, is worth having, willingly do I give it!'

'And now,' continued the Doctor, 'for the present, good-bye. My secret is safe with you, I know. Some day we will tell her, but not now. I must go and see Father Ely, for I have something to ask him.'

And they parted. He with the one thought in his mind, of the lost love and the new-found image of it; she with a heart filled with an untold sorrow.

When she was alone she burst into tears. 'Oh that I might have had the love of that man's heart!' she said to herself. 'But now it would be sinful, wrong to even wish for it. But I may at least love him with a sister's love; look upon him as a brother!'

And she fell upon her knees and asked for strength to act and think aright. She felt alone on the slippery shore.

The tide had risen, the storm had broken, the waters had almost overwhelmed her. Who shall save her?

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

GEORGE SPENCE had the good luck to find Father Ely at home and disengaged. In a short time he was seated with the good Priest in his sanctum, and they were deep in conversation. Of course George had much to tell about Tom Burke, and the golden opinion he had won for himself by his good humour, kindness, and steady goodness. The Doctor gave a little account of their mutual adventures, of the wonderful graces he had received, and the great impression made upon him by the death of little Willie Atwell.

Father Ely received him with his usual kindness, and in a very short time George perceived that at last he had found one to whom he could open his heart and look for advice.

‘For the last day or two,’ said George, ‘I have had a desire—one thought has been uppermost in my mind, and it is this. I should like to spend a week’s quiet somewhere to prepare myself for my reception into the Church. I have been thinking about Lourdes. Miss Cumberland and her friends have told me of its beauties—I think I could not do better than go there, and make a kind of retreat, come back and get you to receive me into the Catholic Church. What do you say to my little plan?’

The good Priest highly approved of this visit to Our Lady's shrine.

After a long conversation, Father Ely gave the Doctor a little Book of Meditations, a 'Garden of the Soul,' and the 'Child's Penny Catechism.'

'Study those well, and think well on what you read, and then you will be quite prepared to receive the great gift which God in His mercy is offering you. Do not let any worldly care trouble you ; leave all to God and His holy Providence. You see,' said the good Priest with a smile, 'you must become a child again, to enter into Christ's Kingdom on earth, as well as His Kingdom in heaven.'

George left the presence of this self-sacrificing Priest, with a happier and calmer mind than he had known for many a long year. He resolved to try and forget the past, and to let no other thought engross his mind, but the one serious consideration of his soul's eternal welfare. 'When I am a Catholic,' he said to himself, 'and my mind is more at rest, I will think seriously what is to be done ; and the good Priest, whose words have so consoled me, will help me, I am sure, by his advice and counsel.'

On the next day George communicated his resolve to May and Lizzie, and set out, without delay, on his journey. The joy of Lizzie at the Doctor's conversion and proposed visit to Lourdes was great indeed. She felt more than ever how grateful she ought to be for such an answer to prayer.

It made her more earnest in the service of Him Who was her one great love—the big joy of her life.

George Spence enjoyed in that beautiful retreat in the Pyrenees, at the Grotto of the Queen of Mercy, a peace and joy such as he had never known before. Mary was to him truly the ‘Cause of his Joy,’ the ‘Consoler of his Afflictions.’ As he looked upon that white marble image in the little niche above the Grotto, his heart seemed to rest, and to fill with an assurance that his own prayers would be heard, as others had been in his behalf. He prayed that he might solve the mystery of his life; that he might gain a certain knowledge as to the lost one, and then he troubled no more about the future. The steadiness of simple faith had taken possession of his heart, and with it had come that wonderful tranquillity which a confiding trust in Providence, a holy resignation to the will of God, always brings. He had learnt to pray. There, at Mary’s shrine, he learnt not only to pray but also *to believe in prayer*. The great and glorious virtue so much needed nowadays, a steady, firm, child-like faith in prayer, was his! For seventeen long years he had trusted to human aid and ingenuity to assist him in his search for his lost treasure. The arm of the flesh had failed—the one whom he had trusted had evidently bitterly deceived him—he left himself and his future success in the care of that all-ruling Providence in which he had learnt to believe.

Nine days at Lourdes soon passed ; and he returned to his native land a wiser and a happier man. The old restless spirit seemed to have fled, and he appeared quite altered.

The glorious feast of the Prince of the Apostles saw the white-haired Doctor a Catholic—a member of the one true Church—kneeling side by side with his two young friends, his ‘sister’ May as he had learnt to call her, and the maiden who was to him the image of his lost love. Somehow he felt that his prayers would soon be answered. A calm peace had fallen on him. That first Communion he had offered for his lost wife, living or dead.

He had so far gathered no tidings of his cousin Laura. This did not distress him. He would wait and patiently pray. He little thought how near she was ! Not a day passed but she knew of his actions ; when he believed her far away, she was watching his movements. She had traced him to Flood’s Court ; she had wondered what might be the purport of his journey ; she had crawled up the stairs and gazed upon the dead features of the poor old woman ! No one had heeded her ; she had come to visit some one, and had mistaken the house ! She felt that she had been so far discovered, that it was prudent for a time to remain concealed. She had been foiled ; she grew more cautious. He little dreamt that on the morning of his first Communion she, in disguise, was watching him from the end of the church.

The hot and sultry month of July had nearly passed. The streets were close, and the weather uncomfortable. The Doctor was seated with Father Ely chatting about the past, and discussing the future prospects of St. Wilfrid's Mission, in the well-being of which he had begun to take a great interest. The good Priest had met with a slight accident—a sprained ankle confined him to his room.

‘I have just heard from Tom Burke,’ said Father Ely. ‘Minnie Redmond, to whom he is engaged to be married, was here just before you came, and brought a little note for me. By the time we receive this, he says he will probably be preparing for his journey homewards.’

‘I shall be so glad to see him again. Since Willie Nelson’s marriage, I have had no one that I could treat as a friend; for Willie has grown so strange, and seems so to fight shy of me, that I can’t make him out at all.’

‘I’m afraid,’ replied the Priest, ‘that the Nelsons will come to speedy grief: they are living too fast. I quite agree with old Byrne that the marriage was a mistake.’

‘Nelson is a great ass!—you will excuse the expression, I know, but it is the only one that conveys my meaning. He won’t let me be a friend to him. I would do anything in my power for him, but he simply will let me do nothing. Somehow or other he seems to mistrust me.’

‘Well,’ said Father Ely, ‘he, and not you, will lose by it! How long, Doctor, do you think I shall be before I can use this foot of mine again?’

‘In two or three days’ time, I think we’ll let you out again,’ replied the Doctor, with a laugh. ‘I’m afraid you’re rather an impatient patient!’

‘Well, then, I must ask a favour of you; will you run down to the other end of London for me?’

‘With the greatest of pleasure; what is the business?’

‘There is a young person in my parish who has grave doubts about her baptism, and as she has to be confirmed in a few days, I promised I would search for her baptismal register. Her mother says it was either at St. Gabriel’s in the Mercantile Road, or at the church in Vinegar Street, that she was baptized. I want you to make a very careful search. She does not know whether she is seventeen or eighteen years old; so you’ll have to look carefully. I will write all particulars and give you a note to each of the churches. Could you go to-morrow morning?’

‘I will go this evening, if you like.’

‘No; to-morrow will do.’

After a few more minutes’ conversation, the Doctor rose to depart. As he opened the door to let himself out, his foot struck against a small gold locket. He picked it up, saying at the same time, ‘Some one must have dropped this.’

‘Ah! that is Minnie Redmond’s locket. How

fortunate she dropped it here!’ said Father Ely. ‘It is a little souvenir from Tom Burke, and was given to him by Lizzie’s mother, Mrs. Mount, on the day on which the brave fellow risked his life to save the child.’

‘It is indeed fortunate,’ said George, handing the locket to Father Ely; as he did so the locket fell out of his hand on to the floor. He again picked it up, saying, ‘I hope I haven’t broken the glass inside, but I am afraid I have.’ He opened it to ascertain the amount of injury that was done.

He was too much surprised at the discovery he made to utter any exclamation.

Father Ely saw the look of blank wonderment on the Doctor’s face, and said earnestly :

‘What is it, Doctor?’

After a short silence, George said, ‘It is another mystery added to the rest. How came this locket into the possession of Mrs. Mount? This locket was once mine: more than eighteen years ago I gave it to Bessie—my lost wife. She had the hair which you see under that broken glass arranged as you see it. The black hair which forms the letter B is hers, the dark-brown hair in the letter G is mine; inside the case you see are engraven the words, “For better, *not* for worse.” I had them engraven at her particular request.’

He sank into a chair, and rested his head on his hand, and for some minutes looked at the locket in silence. He then looked up and said: ‘After all it

may be so. The thought has often crossed my mind that Lizzie is Bessie's daughter—they are so much alike—that she is *my own child*!

'It is indeed all very strange,' said Father Ely. 'Let us wait and pray, and I doubt not the mystery will be cleared up. I will aid you all I can. For the present we will keep our secret to ourselves!'

'God bless you, Father Ely! and good-bye till to-morrow. I leave the locket in your safe keeping. Early in the morning I will execute your commission, and come and tell you the result.'

George Spence took Father Ely's advice, and uttered not a word even to May Cumberland of his new discovery, although he felt much tempted to do so. He went home to his lodgings and meditated on his plan of action for the future. An event happened on the next day which changed all his preconcerted plans.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BAPTISMAL REGISTER.

GEORGE SPENCE rose betimes, and after hearing Mass at St. Wilfrid's and taking a hasty breakfast he proceeded to execute Father Ely's commission. The two letters the good Priest had given him he had placed in the breast-pocket of his coat, but the half-sheet of paper with the name, age, and addresses of the churches he had

folded and placed in his waistcoat-pocket. Before he left home he thought he would refresh his memory and look again at this little scrap given him on the evening before. To his consternation he could not find it. He searched for it, but to no purpose. He could only surmise that he must have pulled it from his pocket with his latch-key and dropped it on the step the night before.

‘Anyhow,’ he said to himself, ‘it will do no one any good that finds it. It will be Greek to them; the only nuisance is that it delays me a little, and makes me look a little foolish with Father Ely.’

So he set off to Father Ely’s, got a fresh copy of his instructions, and with an apology for his stupidity set out on his errand to the two churches to search for the baptismal register required by his pastor.

If he had known that that scrap of paper had fallen into the hands of his cousin Laura, perhaps he would not have felt so very comfortable. We have said that she set a strict watch on his movements. That night she had herself seen him leave the Presbytery and had followed him to his lodgings. It was as he imagined; he had pulled the paper from his pocket, and dropped it on the door-step. As she passed she saw it lying there, and picked it up. When she reached the apartments where she was staying, she opened it and read it. The handwriting was strange to her, so was the name; but when she read the names of the churches she

seemed to take a strange interest in that scrap of paper. She folded it and placed it in her purse. She gave strict orders to be called early, and the next morning repaired to St. Wilfrid's at the time of the Mass which the Doctor attended. She had determined to watch him carefully, and ascertain if possible the meaning of that little bit of rough writing on that mysterious piece of paper.

The Doctor, unconscious of any danger lurking about him, or of the nearness of the one person whom he had learnt to dread and fear, proceeded eastward through the great city. At length he reached Vinegar Street, and diligently searched the registers for the baptismal certificate, but to no effect. An hour had been spent looking over the books, and so he determined to visit St. Gabriel's. He passed down the busy streets, and his mind was full of the past. Yet somehow he felt more resigned than he had done before ; something seemed to whisper to him that rest was at hand. He was dreaming a bright day-dream of the future.

If it ever chanced that he could trace the history of the locket from the time it left Bessie's hands till Mrs. Mount possessed herself of it, surely all mystery would be at an end, and he would know all. If it should be proved that Lizzie was his child, then, whether her mother were living or dead, he would be happy. If she were living, he would find her ; if dead, then at least his mind would be at rest. And as he thought of Lizzie he thought of May

Cumberland, of all her goodness to the child, of her gentleness, and of her affection for him. 'And I have found,' he mused to himself, 'a sister's love in her; and for her and my child I can live and work, and the future will be one of brightness, peace, and happiness.'

We dream bright day-dreams of future happiness, but how seldom are they realised in the manner in which we dreamt they would be! How often these visions of peace come to us, but only prove to be the harbingers of some huge and unforeseen sorrow.

When he got to St. Gabriel's he saw the Priest in charge, and presented his note of introduction.

'I am sorry to learn that my good friend, Father Ely, is not able to come himself,' said the Priest, 'but I will give you all the assistance I can. I hope the little accident is not at all serious.'

'Oh, nothing of any consequence,' answered the Doctor; 'only a sprained ankle. Father Ely will be about again in a couple of days.'

'I am glad to hear it. If you'll stay here I'll fetch the books, and we can examine them together.'

After a few minutes the Priest returned with the registers.

'We will commence at the date twenty years ago. People often make mistakes about these things, and so we will commence a little earlier.'

They had been examining for some little while, when George's eye fell upon two entries on the same page which at once arrested his attention.

‘Excuse me,’ he said, ‘but I am very interested in those two entries.’ He pointed at the same time to two baptism registrations in the name of Spence.

The Priest who was with him explained them to him. They were evidently the entries of the baptism of mother and daughter. The daughter was baptized a few days before the mother. The mother’s baptism was without doubt that of a convert, as it was private and without ceremonies, and had been administered conditionally. The Priest did not observe the effect of his words upon George; and was proceeding with his search for the entry they required when the Doctor said :

‘Might I have a copy of those two entries?’

The Priest looked up in alarm, for the voice was so faltering, and the face of the Doctor was white with an almost death-like pallor.

‘Are you ill, sir?’ asked the Priest in alarm.

‘No,’ replied George; ‘only I have been greatly startled at the sight of those entries you have just been looking at. They are evidently those of two who are nearly related to me.’

‘Well, well,’ said his companion, ‘I will copy them out with the other, for you see I have found it at last!’

When George received the copy of the entries in question, he asked: ‘Where is the Priest now who performed these baptisms?’

‘Which?’

‘Those of the name of Spence.’

‘Oh, Father Blackenbury,’ said the Priest. ‘He was a very old friend of mine ; but some ten years ago he left England, and is at present in New York. I had a letter from him the other day.’

‘Thank you,’ said George, ‘and pray allow me to make you a little offering for your kindness and trouble,’ and he took from his pocket-book a bank-note and placed it in the hands of the astonished Priest, took up his hat, bade him good-morning, and departed.

He threw himself into a hansom cab, and bade the driver hasten as fast as he could to St. Wilfrid’s.

As he proceeded he took both the papers and examined them. There could be no mistake. ‘Bessie Spence, the daughter of William Turner and Elizabeth White.’ There was the old birthday of his lost treasure—and the date of the baptism was not quite three months after the cruel day on which she had fled from his home !

The other register was quite as remarkable as that of Bessie Spence ; it was the register of another ‘Bessie Spence,’ daughter of George Spence and Bessie (formerly Turner), and the godmother was Elizabeth Mount.

George thought he saw through it all ; but how came Bessie to be received into the Church ? was she still living, or was she dead ?

Suddenly the cab stopped. They were at St. Wilfrid’s. He had been so lost in thought that he had not noticed that they were at their destination.

He scarcely stopped to learn that Father Ely was disengaged, and to the amazement of Margaret, the housekeeper, the Doctor knocked at the good Priest's door, and entered almost before he could say 'Come in !'

'Don't be alarmed, Father Ely, at my impetuosity, but I have made a most wonderful discovery ! A strange Providence sent me on your errand to-day. I have found your baptismal certificate, and *two others !*'

George handed the certificates to Father Ely. After a few minutes' silence,

'Be seated, my dear Doctor,' said the Priest. 'This is indeed a wonderful light thrown upon the mystery of your life and her life. From my experience as a Missionary Priest, I should say that Bessie Spence is dead ; that she was received into the Church on her death-bed. Probably she was living with Mrs. Mount, and left her child to her care. This will account for a great deal, but not all. You must go on with the inquiry. Stay with me, and have a little dinner. I am alone to-day, we will talk over matters quietly, and after dinner you can go on with your search.'

The good Father rang his bell and acquainted his housekeeper that the Doctor would take dinner with him.

'You see, Doctor, we are now in possession of many, very many, important facts. Lizzie was born not quite three months after your wife left

you. Your wife was received into the Church, and probably died. Mrs. Mount was Lizzie's god-mother ; gave her her own name and adopted her. It is my opinion that Miss Mapleson knows all about it. You see there was the ring ; and the wonderful interest taken in Lizzie by your cousin, when she met her in France. Then there was that locket. We can soon see whether my surmise is correct or not about your wife's death.'

'How so ?' asked George eagerly.

'Why, we have only to search the registers of death in the church in which she was baptized ; and if there were none kept there, the Parish Register will give evidence. This you must do this afternoon. I will give you a note. The Priest who baptized them is, I believe, in America.'

'Yes ; the Priest who wrote out the certificates told me that Father Blackenbury was an old friend of his, and that he had heard from him lately.'

'That is fortunate,' said Father Ely. 'When you have found out about the death of your wife, it would be best, I think, to proceed at once to America. I think you will do more by a personal interview than we could hope to do by correspondence. The Priest at St. Gabriel's will doubtless give you a letter of introduction to Father Blackenbury ; and before another month is passed, all will, I trust, be cleared up.'

'We will say nothing,' said George, 'to Miss May

or Lizzie till all is so evident that no doubt remains. Don't you think that would be the best ?

'Decidedly,' answered Father Ely. 'Not a word till we have thoroughly solved the whole question, and cleared up everything.'

The result of that afternoon's inquiry was the certain knowledge that poor Bessie Spence had passed from this life two days after her happy reception into the Church.

George spent an hour that evening in Great Burley Street with May and Lizzie, whom he informed of his projected journey to America. May had not been well all day. She had been trembling, and aching with pain in every limb. Her colour came and went as she tried by a great effort to appear cheerful and merry. The Doctor observed it.

'You have,' he said, when he rose to depart, 'a bad feverish cold on you. For the sake of our darling Lizzie, and for all our sakes, you must promise to take care of yourself. Get strong and well by the time I return ; this will be, I trust, my last journey ; at the end of a month I shall be back again. Pray for me ; God bless and help you both !'

May bade him farewell with tears in her eyes ; and even Lizzie seemed moved at the parting. When he was gone, May said to Lizzie :

'I feel very sorrowful to-night ; it seems as though I had said good-bye to him for ever.'

‘You are not well, darling. You need rest and sleep. Please God you’ll be better to-morrow.’

By an early train George started for Liverpool, and in the afternoon was on his way across the great ocean to the far West.

May had passed a restless night, and was too unwell to rise in the morning. Father Ely visited her in the evening, and insisted on her seeing a doctor. The medical man pronounced that the patient was in a state of high fever, and was on no account to be allowed to leave her room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE END OF THE PILGRIMAGE.

FATHER ELY, Lizzie, and Mrs. Kemp were in deep consultation in May’s little sitting-room ; poor May was tossing wearily on her bed of sickness.

The doctor had just left, after his second day’s visit.

Lizzie and Mrs. Kemp were in tears ; even the good Priest was much moved.

‘You must not fret, dear children, but bear up bravely for the poor sick child’s sake. All your care and energy will be needed. You heard what the doctor said. It will go very hard with her. But you must cheer up, leave all in those Hands

where all is safe. I needn't tell you to pray ; this you will be sure to do. I shall come round and see her again soon. I wish Dr. Spence had not gone ; but there is no hope of getting him back, as the steamer left yesterday afternoon. At all events I am able to be about again.'

'That is a blessing, dear Father,' said Lizzie. 'What should we do without you ?'

'I wonder how she caught this fever ?' said poor old Mrs. Kemp.

'Well, my child, it is not easily traced. But she has been ailing for a long while, and has been very weak ; and I'm afraid she has been over-exerting herself among the poor people in the courts and alleys ; and in this sultry hot weather typhoid fever is easily caught among those bad odours, by one of a weakened frame. It is God's good work ; and however it ends, it will be for His greater glory. We must be resigned ; do our duty and pray hard. I have hopes that she will be spared to us for a long while yet.'

Father Ely returned in the afternoon, and found that the physician and a second medical adviser whom he had called in were with the patient. He waited for them. When they came downstairs the doctor took the Priest on one side and said : 'We are afraid there is no hope of recovery. The worst symptoms are developing themselves ; little short of a miracle can raise up the good young lady. We shall do what we can ; she has evidently been

sickening for some time, to judge from her present condition.'

After a few words the good Priest entered the sick-room and saw May alone. He explained to her in the kindest manner the gravity of her sickness, and the necessity of making every preparation for death, which might be near—very near.

'You know best, Father,' she said; 'and God's holy Will be done. If the time has come, I am ready to die. My prayers are answered. Dear Mrs. Kemp is a Catholic, and so is *he*! It is better for me and for him that he is not here. You will console poor Lizzie as none other can console her. Things were too bright to last. I have felt lately that I should not live long. You will take care and look after Mrs. Kemp and Lizzie; and to Dr. Spence you will always be a kind good friend, I know. Prepare me for my last end, and give me the last Sacraments as soon as you can. You will not leave anything till I grow unconscious.'

'Rest assured, dear child, all shall be done that can be done.'

'You will be with me when I die?'

'If possible. And now compose yourself. In about an hour's time I shall return to give you the last rites.'

'God bless you! His holy Will be done.'

Father Ely went down and told in gentle words the sad news, that there were no earthly hopes of May's recovery. Once more he bade them bear up

for the poor sick child's sake, and told them he would soon return to perform the consoling rite of administering the last Sacraments.

Lizzie controlled her feelings as best she could, and busied herself in preparing the room for the Divine Guest Who was coming. She then knelt down by her sick sister-friend and prayed for her. Her heart was almost breaking, she had never known how much she had loved May before ; but she stifled her grief for her friend's sake. It seemed hard to make an act of resignation, but she made it. It was like giving up half her soul ; but she forced herself to say, 'Thy Will, not mine, be done, O Lord !' At the same time she prayed fervently for May's recovery. 'Who knows ? perhaps she may not die,' she said to herself. 'She is Mary's child ; for our sake perhaps she may be spared.'

May resigned herself to the care of that good Providence which had ever watched over her, and with patient trust and great fervour received the last Sacraments. Father Ely was alone with her for some time, and then he summoned Lizzie and Mrs. Kemp into the room.

It was a beautiful, but sad spectacle. The fair-haired maiden raised herself in bed ; her fair face flushed almost crimson with the fever-heat which was cruelly burning life away. She was very calm, and a quiet repose settled over her features. There is no happier, brighter, more heavenly sight on earth than that of a fervent Christian receiving the

great Eternal Guest, and taking the Strong One for Companion on that great journey into the dark valley of death that leads to Eternity.

They watched by May that night in silence. At times she slept, and seemed to wake more refreshed; the fever grew less ardent, and she got more rest. When morning came she appeared brighter, and was in less pain. Lizzie left her to snatch a short sleep and repose awhile.

Father Ely found May cheerful and resigned, but very weak. The doctor again saw her, but still gave no hopes. Many a fervent prayer went up for her recovery: children at school, the poor in the homes, the Priest at the Altar—all remembered her, for she had been so kind, so charitable to all.

She herself did not think she would recover; and she had fervently prepared herself to die.

Lizzie was again sitting by her. The afternoon was bright and cheerful, and the sun was shining into the room. May opened her eyes and held out her hand to her companion.

‘Come closer, darling,’ she said, ‘for I want to talk to you.’

Lizzie, heedless of any danger, stooped over her and kissed her burning cheek, and then sat by the side of her companion’s bed.

‘You remember,’ said May, ‘some weeks ago, we went to see that child buried, and the spot where we sat, don’t you?’

‘Yes, May dearest—in the cemetery, near the white slab over the child’s grave.’

‘Lizzie darling, when I am dead lay me there in that spot; and put a plain white marble cross over my grave, with the simple words, “Pray for the soul of May Cumberland,” with the date of my birth and death, and the words, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except to love and serve God alone!” I feel quite happy and content to die. Somehow or other I don’t want to live. Don’t cry, dearest; we shall all meet again in that beautiful home of which Father Ely has been talking to me. We shall love one another there with the purest, brightest love, and no one will rob us then of the love we have for each other. We shan’t fear then to lose the love we have, for it will be all in God, and for God.’

‘But it is so hard to see you suffering so, my poor sister.’

‘Yes, darling, I do suffer; but is not God good to send me suffering? If I didn’t suffer, perhaps I shouldn’t want to die; and didn’t He suffer for us? it’s not much we can do for Him. See how all this throws us upon Him, for He alone can help us.’

She closed her eyes and moved her lips in prayer. After a little silence she said:

‘We have often spoken together about ourselves; whatever we might say we have said to each other. You have known my earthly love. You know

how I from the beginning loved George Spence. You saw how it grew upon me. I had one hope—that he would return my love; that I might live to make him happy. I hoped, and still I hoped that it might be so. I lived on hope. It brightened life, it cheered me night and day, and all this while I grew to love him more and more.

‘When he returned from his last long journey he told me the secret history of his life; some day he will tell it to you. From all he said, from his very manner, and his way, I learnt—and I loved you all the more for it—that of all his earthly loves he loved *you* the most, the strongest and the best.’

‘Oh, May, May darling!’ said Lizzie energetically, ‘what you hint at can *never* be. I too have my secret, which you now shall know. I am not free to give my heart and hand to any man. My love has long been given to another. Look, May,’ she continued, brightly, showing her left hand, on which she wore her rosary ring, ‘there’s my wedding-ring.’

‘What do you mean, child? Surely you are jesting; that is not a wedding-ring!’

‘Dearest sister,’ said Lizzie, her face growing very brilliant, but solemn, as she spoke, ‘I am in earnest; by my Father Director’s leave, I have given myself to God by a vow of virginity. Others may die, others grow cold, others prove false, others mistake our motives and our lives, others prove exacting, cruel, unkind, and inconsiderate; but He

will be true for ever: the Virgin's Son, the Virgin's Spouse, He Himself the Virgin of virgins, is my portion now, and, I trust, for ever !'

'Oh, happy, happy Lizzie ! but I must not envy you,' said May.

'Ah ! dearest sister, how sad it all seems ! I understand now the secret sorrow that has been consuming you. If he had but spoken to me, he might then have learnt to love you who so loved him. Oh, how very sad is human love ; how hard the lot of those that trust to it !'

'Do not fret for me, darling,' said May. 'I see it is all for the best. God wanted me in another way than that of which I dreamt day and night. We both have learnt our lesson, and I trust we both are now equally His, and His alone. Truly all is vanity but loving God.

'Some day, Lizzie, you will tell him how I loved him, prayed for him, and watched over you, because I knew how very dear you were to him. We have loved each other very dearly, you and I, dear sister—and it is hard to part ; but the end must come, and you have always taught me to bow down to God's Will, and trust His loving Providence. He will provide for you and him. I feel how very wrong it was to love so ardently ; and but for the kindness of my good Director, and the consolation of our holy Faith, I think I should have lost my reason. Life seemed meaningless without this one object to live for here, as well as the great end

hereafter. There was none to whom I could tell this secret of my life—not even to yourself could I say more than I saw you knew. In the secrecy of the Confessional alone I could receive comfort and advice. But even then it haunted me, and the more I struggled against it the more it broke me down in the end. You know now why I was so sad at times.

‘When we were at Lourdes I prayed hard for dear Mrs. Kemp’s conversion, and God has granted it ; my good old nurse, my motherly friend is one of us—a child of the Church. I prayed also for *his* conversion ; and I offered God my life for *his* happiness. I offered the sacrifice of my life if it were needed for his conversion. God has accepted the offering. Why should I wish for more ? I have lived to see him a Catholic ; to kneel at the same Altar-rails with him. My work is done ; since his return I have tried to make a virtue of necessity, and resign myself to God’s Will. I have given a little of my time to the service of His poor, and once more offered my life to God. He has accepted it. For some days a strange weight has been upon me ; and this, dear Lizzie, is the end. It is very nigh now. It seems sad, but it is best that it should be as it is. I shall never see him any more in this life. It has come very suddenly at last.

‘This fever that is on me now has come as a mark of God’s love. In it I see His hand. I shall die happy, very happy. I want to put all things of

earth away, and simply to prepare to meet Him Who loves me with such exceeding love.'

The two loving friends spoke of all their little plans and confided them to God. May gave Lizzie what instructions she had, and then she took leave of poor Mrs. Kemp, and told them to bear up bravely, and left them to Father Ely's care.

The presence of the good Priest was her great consolation. Even in her periods of delirium she would rally directly he came into the room. She always knew him. Even when Lizzie could not rouse her, she recognised the voice of the keeper of her conscience. She would look for hours at the door and simply say, 'I wish he would come.'

And so Lizzie and Mrs. Kemp watched their charge through the long days and dreary nights. It was strange, but in her delirium she never mentioned George's name, never raved about him. All her thoughts seemed centred on her work for God. 'I must be up and visit my poor people ; I wonder is Our Lady's Altar prepared !' Her former little religious duties seemed the only things that occupied her thoughts in her delirium. At times her mind wandered back to Lourdes, and she would talk of the rushing water and the songs of the birds, and pointing to the foot of her bed, would say, 'Oh, don't you see her, how beautiful she is ; how white her robes are !' and when they asked her whom she saw, she would answer, 'Why, our Mother Mary !'

and then she would sing a verse of a hymn, or a part of the Litany.

And all this time the fever fire was burning life away. She would grow conscious and very quiet, and seem much stronger ; and after her Communions seemed to rally so much that Lizzie and Mrs. Kemp could scarcely believe she could not recover.

‘ And is there still no hope, dear Father ? ’ asked Lizzie of Father Ely, on the ninth day.

‘ Humanly speaking, none whatever, my dear child. ’

‘ Oh, it is very hard to think that we shall lose her ! ’

‘ What, my child ! will you grudge her to her God ? Shall He not have His own ? You and I know the goodness and devotedness of that life which is fast passing away from us. What is there on earth to live for ? Can she ever be better prepared to die than she is now ? It is hard to lose the friends we love ; but we must not be selfish in our love. God takes our loved ones for His own sake, and for their and our good ! ’

‘ Yes, Father, I will try to be resigned ; but my heart is nearly breaking. ’

‘ God comfort you, and console you ; and do not forget the broken-hearted Mother Mary, for you are both her children ; she will help you both. God bless you ! ’

The good Priest went to his work, and Lizzie returned to her place by the sick-bed, to relieve the

good old servant, who watched by turns with her.

Another night passed. Another day was drawing to a close. There was now little doubt that the end was nigh. The patient became weaker, and her mind wandered more than it had done before. Father Ely was reading some of the beautiful prayers from the Visitation of the Sick ; May was eagerly listening.

‘How beautiful!’ she said. ‘Father, I am continually hearing the Angels singing around my bed. It is very beautiful, but it seems to be far, far away ; and yet they seem to be there!’ And she told him all the fancies, the beautiful fancies—and who shall say that they were only fancies, and not perhaps realities?—of her half-unconscious moments. She did not call them dreams, or fancies, but said she saw and heard ! Who can tell what we shall see and hear in the last hours of our mortal life ?

She was full of gratitude. For everything she thanked God ; and for every little office rendered her, she roused herself and thanked those who waited on her.

Father Ely had been gone some hours ; Lizzie was alone in the sick-room. The weary night had worn on, and it wanted less than an hour to the break of day. An awful stillness reigned in the apartment ; the breathing of May seemed more hushed and solemnly regular. Lizzie took the

light and held it over her companion. Her eyes were open, she turned them towards her young friend, and she beckoned her to her. Her lips moved ; Lizzie moistened them and listened ; she said in faint accents : ‘ Father Ely——where is ——he ?’

‘ I will send for him, darling.’

She summoned her maid, and then roused Mrs. Kemp, who was resting in the adjoining room. She sent for the Priest.

When Father Ely arrived, May was unconscious. Her breathing was heavy, and her agony had commenced ; her poor frame was convulsed with pain.

Life was hastening to its close. Over the great City the sun was about to rise, and wake it to another day of toil and labour. The presence of the Priest seemed to quell all the convulsing pangs of death. A look of peace settled on the features, the breathing became slow and measured. Father Ely saw the end had come. Once more he imparted to her the Priestly absolution, and the great Indulgence, and then recommended her soul to her Creator in the beautiful words of the ritual. As he bade that Christian soul go forth in the Name of its Creator and its God, he saw the eyes open and a shadow flit across the now pale face. It was like the shadow from a passing Angel’s wing ! Then came a long deep breath—the last deep sigh ; a sweet smile passed over the white features,

and the spirit winged its flight to the everlasting mountains of eternity !

May Cumberland was dead !

CHAPTER XXI.

A DESOLATE HOME.

THE solemn Requiem was over, and the body of the fair May Cumberland was carried to its last resting-place near the white slab over the child's grave, where she had wished to be buried. It was a sad but a consoling sight. All those who had known her and loved her were there, all save one ! He was far away in a distant land, dreaming day-dreams which would never be realised. Lizzie, pale and sad, with her deep suppressed emotion ; poor broken-hearted Mrs. Kemp, the faithful servant who had nursed her darling and cared for her with a mother's care ; the kind-hearted Violet Byrne, and the cheerful, self-sacrificing little Minnie Redmond, stood by the open grave. Mr. and Mrs. Byrne and the Nelsons were also there. The faithful old Bolton, too, was there, grieving with his large true-hearted grief for the loss of the young mistress he had learnt to love and respect so dearly.

Many of those in the midst of whom she had often passed as an angel of mercy had gathered together to show their respect to the memory of the

good lady whom they had learnt to love. The children of St. Wilfrid's schools—those little ones in whose welfare she had so often interested herself—who had become doubly dear to her on Lizzie's account, they too were there.

When the blue coffin with its bright white nails and ornaments was placed on the side of the grave, it was covered and heaped up with the choicest flowers of purest white. Wreaths, crosses and bouquets were thrown upon the coffin in such profusion, that May's lifeless body rested under a bed of flowers.

Father Ely performed the last sad rites—so full of hope, and so beautiful in their simplicity. His voice was strong and clear, his step was firm ; but the good Priest's heart was full, and he scarcely heeded the crowd through which they passed. A little incident occurred which fairly broke him down. One of the children whom May had nursed through a painful sickness, and to whom she had endeared herself by many acts of kindness, forced her way to the front and threw herself on her knees at the side of the grave. Extending her arms towards the dead, she lifted up her voice, and amidst her sobs exclaimed, 'Oh Father, Father, bring her back again to us !' The Priest's voice faltered, his eyes filled with tears, and, with a strong effort, he read the English prayers with which the solemn service concludes.

A well-known writer has beautifully described

the great desolation of the most sorrowful moment of our grief in the loss of our dear dead.

'All was not over when death was over. We spoke of the lifeless frame in the masculine or feminine, as if the body was the real self of the one we loved. The house was not forlorn, at least not utterly forlorn, though it was darkened and silent. The dead furnished it, peopled it with one exclusive growing life, and filled it with a mysterious attraction. It made home more home. It was now a consecrated home. It had but been a common home before. Oh, there was such a manifold companionship in the dead! Its white face was so eloquent. It did not tell of pain just passed, and the gnawing of hungry disease, and the blight of pestilence. But it spoke of old times, of simple childish years. It was a very resurrection of by-gone looks, of almost forgotten expressions, of innocent youthfulness of countenance, blooming above death like the snowdrops above the hoarfrost. The compressed lips smiled at us. The closed eyes looked at us, without opening. The blue-veined hands were full of meaning. It was a dark hour when the coffin closed, but the spell was not gone yet. The moment of desolation did not come when the blue spires of incense up-curved themselves out of the damp grave, and the clods rattled on the coffin lid, and the hollow sound was like a frightening echo of eternity. But it came when the mourner set his first step again on the

threshold of his door, having left the partner of his life, or the child of his hopes, or the mother of his boyhood, behind him in the grave. Then the house was empty indeed, and his heart was empty too, and desolate.'

And so home was desolate when Lizzie returned, and her poor heart was very empty, and very desolate. As she entered the old, dear room, a sense of her loss came over her, and she sank on the sofa, rested her head on the cushion; the fountains of grief seemed to have broken up in her soul, and she wept bitterly. She had borne up wonderfully during the swift sickness; and while the dear dead was still with her she did not realise her loss. Now she felt very lonely; and her soul seemed overwhelmed with sorrow. She had not known how deep her affection for May had become, how that sisterly love had sunk into her heart, till the moment that she returned to the desolate home, with the loved one gone.

Father Ely found her prostrated with grief. He came into that home as an Angel of Consolation. There were many who needed his kind cheering words in their sudden affliction.

'My child,' he said to Lizzie, whom he found alone in tears. 'You must moderate your grief, and resign yourself to the will of that kind Providence which has watched over you.'

'Oh, Father, Father!' said the poor afflicted child, 'it is hard to bear—to be patient! Now I

know what sorrow means. Why did I ever come here? Was it only for this? To lose the one of all, my dearest, my best, my darling sister! I little thought I loved her so dearly. Oh that I might have died, and that she might have lived!

‘My child, be patient. Your life has been a wonderful manifestation of the care of a good Providence. You are the child of a special Providence. Perhaps ere long you will see it more plainly than you see it now. Your good fortune, thank God, has not spoilt you. But it was necessary that this sorrow should befall you. You are now more thrown upon Him Who is so jealous of our love, that He takes from us our nearest, our dearest, and our best, when He sees it is best for us, and for them. It is best for her that she should go.’

‘Oh that I could think so!’ sobbed Lizzie. ‘I tried to believe it, and I resigned my heart; but now, now, now! Oh, *why* has she gone?’

‘Kneel down, dear child, and offer yourself to the sweet Queen of Mercy, the Mother of Sorrows! It may be that the good soul that has gone is waiting in Purgatory—suffering now—waiting for your patient resignation, to pay the temporal debt.’

‘No, Father, she must be in heaven, she was such a saintly girl; she was so good, so kind, so gentle, so true. God would not——’

‘Stop, my child! you don’t know what you say. It is wrong to canonise our dead. Let us pray for them; we rob them of rest and glory by our too

human love. Be obedient, like a good child, and do as I bid you.'

Lizzie knelt down and repeated, in broken accents, a few words after the good Priest.

'Now,' he said, 'God bless and protect you! I shall leave you for a while. You need rest. I shall see you again soon.'

Father Ely went to his work among the poorer members of his flock. He did not let his manner in any way betray the sorrow of his heart, yet that fatherly heart was very full when he thought of the child who had gone, and the great blank that her passing away had left in the hearts of those who had learnt to love her so sincerely and truly. Her death was a heavy loss to the poor of St. Wilfrid's whom she visited so often, and to whose temporal wants she ministered with so ready and so liberal a hand.

'Well, well,' he said to himself, 'God knows best; His Will be done.'

And then he thought of poor George Spence, and how different all would have been had May lived. He had received an answer to his telegram, which had conveyed to George the sad news of May's death, and had learnt that the absence of the Priest, in search of whom the Doctor had gone, had delayed his mission of inquiry. He had to take a long journey into the country, in hopes of meeting him.

And he thought of Lizzie, and what was in store

for her. He wondered about her future, and almost trembled at the thought of even a possibility of such a life being wrecked in the world, or such a soul being ever turned away from God's love. He prayed earnestly for her as he passed along the busy noisy streets, and into the filthy and stifling courts. A storm had burst over her soul. He saw how necessary it was that human ties should be broken ; how imperceptibly her heart had clung to her new-found friend. He saw, more than she saw, the dangers of such a heart. It had almost rebelled against the sorrow that had come to it. A great grace was passing ; would it pass away and not bring her nearer to her God ? Or would she accept it by a patient resignation to the Divine Will ? Again he thought of the dead—the happy dead—and he repeated to himself the words of the Apostle of love, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours.' And he thought of the happiness of the happy dead—the dead at rest from toil, from sorrow, and from all earthly pain ; the happy dead at rest 'from carking care and ever-present sin,' at rest in realms of endless peace and rest. And once more he repeated to himself, 'It was best that she should go !'

That same day, as evening drew on, he went into the Church to recommend once more his flock to the care of Him 'Who careth equally for the little and the great,' and found Lizzie in silent prayer

before the little shrine of Mary. After a while she arose, and seeing her spiritual Father, went up to him and asked him if she might speak to him in the confessional.

The great struggle of wounded nature against God-sent affliction was over! Grace had prevailed, and to the sorrowful heart peace had returned. She had bowed herself down, and worshipped in humble resignation the merciful Providence that had sent her the greatest sorrow she had ever felt. She went back to her heavenly Mother's feet sorrowful, but happy, repeating to herself the words the good Priest had quoted to her from God's written Word, 'The mercy of God is *beautiful* in the time of affliction, as a cloud of rain in the time of drought.'

'I have been selfish in my sorrow,' she said to herself; 'I will hide my grief, and go back and comfort that dear old soul, who has lost her earthly all, in the sad affliction that has fallen on us!'

And poor old Mrs. Kemp needed all the comforting words that the loving heart of the dark-haired girl could give her, and all the kind care of little acts of a self-forgetting sympathising soul.

The good Priest was unremitting in his efforts to console; and his presence in the house of sorrow was that of the Messenger of peace.

'I have been thinking,' he said, 'that it will be well for you both to have a change. You must pack up your boxes and leave to-morrow for Hope'

Lodge. Old Bolton shall be in readiness to meet you ; the change in the beautiful scenery of Farnshire will do you both good. If I am able, I will myself run down and see you both in the course of a few days.'

'Reverend Father,' said Mrs. Kemp, 'we shall get on very sadly without your kind words and cheerful face ; but you always know what is best for us, and so we must obey you.'

'That is right ; and now, good-bye, and God bless and protect you both !'

'God bless you, Father !' they both answered.

When the Priest was gone, Lizzie turned to Mrs. Kemp and said :

'What should we have done without our good Father ?'

Mrs. Kemp simply answered, 'What should we ?' The next evening they arrived at Hope Lodge.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SECRET TOLD.

IT has been well said, that though jealousy is produced by love, as ashes are by fire, yet jealousy extinguishes love as ashes smother the flame. There is no vice which is so practicable at all times and in every place as jealousy ; it is an insidious passion that can never be quiet for want

of irritation. A jealous envy possesses the heart, and the heart's best feelings become soon stifled ; the fire of affection is quenched, and the heart becomes cold and hard as unburnt coal. Even natural virtues are extinguished by it, and the soul becomes a live brood of the most contemptible and torturing thoughts urging on their victim to the brink of the abyss.

Frustrated love, disappointed and unrequited affection, had changed Laura Mapleson's better nature. She had hoped in the beginning to win the love of George's heart ; she had failed. She had said that the burden of the day of her life was 'to learn to love and then to hate.' There was much that was good and noble in her nature and her better instincts ; her kindlier feelings had often struggled against the great passion that was so deeply rooting itself in her heart, but she had not allowed the good to prevail—and each conflict found her weaker for good, and was an easier victory for evil. The more and more she indulged in the desire of revenge, the stronger the wild untamed passion grew upon her. At length she had begun to hate. Dark, deep, unrelenting hatred was the ruling passion of her existence. Her life had become one lifelong plotting and planning to frustrate another's happiness. Proud and embittered, strong in the sense of her own strength of will, and the knowledge of the secret which she believed was hers alone, she pursued her course.

She had none to guide her, none to help her, none to speak to ; she stood in her self-sufficiency alone. She had no sense or help of religion to warn her, to save her. She had never made a friend, she distrusted humanity ; she had nothing to consult but her own cold, cruel, reckless and relentless heart. There was no sympathising love of any human heart that she would permit to rouse her better, softer, kindlier woman's nature. And so her heart dried up. A fire seemed to burn in her veins, instead of blood. She could find rest neither in the solitude of her apartments, nor in the busy streets, nor in the whirl of amusement. It seemed as though an evil spirit possessed her. Could it be that it was so in reality ? Who shall say ? Oftentimes we put down dark deeds to temporary insanity, when the plain English would be possession or obsession by the devil ! There are thousands such in the world in which we live ; they rise to the surface and roam at large in great revolutions. Apostates they are from God and man, unbelievers in the divinity of the Creator and the humanity of the creature ; they are without love, they distrust all. Already they are murderers in their heart ; their hands are against all men, and every man's hand against them ; they are wanderers on the face of God's fair earth, and so hasty is the flight of their wandering, that they see not earth's beautiful fairness. They bear the mark of Cain on their bold and self-reliant brows.

The Honourable Laura's appearance had greatly changed of late. Her features had become paler and more emaciated, and the feline expression more deeply set upon them. She had grown restless. Life seemed to press heavily upon her. At times she would walk down to the dark waters of the cruel river where the cruel lights of London were reflected in the rising and falling tide, and would suddenly leave them, shuddering and in haste. They had an unexplained attraction for her. But she could not trust herself near them for any long time. What was life to her now? What had she to live for?

Where there is money, agents for almost any purpose can be procured. Money, agents, and her own ever-vigilant self had enabled her to trace all her cousin George's doings. She knew full well the errand on which he was journeying to the far West. The scrap of paper that she had picked up on the door-step of his lodgings had put her on the right track. He was in a fair way of clearing up the secret of his life; if the Priest who had attended Bessie Spence in her last illness should only be reached, no doubt would remain in her cousin's mind. The mystery would be solved.

As she walked up and down by the murky waters, and the tide rose and fell against the stone steps of the embankment piers—the dark tide of unquelled hatred rose and fell in her soul and dashed against her cold stony heart. ‘Which shall

it be ?' she mused ; ' which shall it be ? The father or the child ? Which shall it be ?' and she stood still and looked at the black river. ' And *then*,' she said, ' these cruel waters can hide my misery and my shame. Which shall it be ? Let him live to weep his loss and curse the day he ever crossed my love and frustrated a loving woman's happiness ! Why should I pursue him with my hate ? That pale-faced child on whom he dotes has spoilt all my plans ; by her, all that I laboured for and lived for has been frustrated.' Then dark and dreadful thoughts—darker than the dark night, more murky than the murky waters—filled her mind as she walked homewards.

Ere long she heard of May Cumberland's illness and death. On the day of the funeral she stood on the outside of the crowd untouched, unmoved. Her heart was too hardened now for any such sight to touch its finer chords. A sneer of vengeful triumph settled upon her features as she gazed upon the coffin. She muttered to herself :

' Would that it contained that living image of my rival ! But yon grave is deep. Before long he may have to follow to that grave the one on whom at present all his hopes and thoughts are centred. They are both still at my mercy. Who can tell ?'

May Cumberland was buried, and Lizzie was at Hope Lodge in the beautiful county of Fernshire.

Laura, who informed herself of Lizzie's movements, left her apartments in London and also travelled into Fernshire.

A bright and beautiful August had ended. The autumn months had commenced. A lovely afternoon in the beginning of September found Lizzie seated in that favourite spot in the grounds of Hope Lodge where she loved to be alone. It was that secluded and tree-shadowed spot where the old summer-house stood built in the bank above the noisy little stream, hard by the lake.

Her eyes were following the flight of beautiful-winged insects that flitted in the sunshine beyond the trees, but her thoughts were far away ; she was thinking of the dead. She recalled the last time that May had sat there with her, and they had spoken of their little joys and plans for a bright and happy future. The place seemed wonderfully solemn. In a few days the white-haired Doctor was expected home : old Bolton had gone that very day to the post town to see if there were any letters from Father Ely, or whether the good Priest himself had arrived for his promised visit, and had not yet returned. Mrs. Kemp was busy indoors.

As Lizzie sat thinking, suddenly a little involuntary shudder passed over her, and she roused herself and looked round. To her astonishment she found she was not alone. Near her stood a tall woman in black, with her veil closely drawn over her face. A strange feeling, almost of dread and fear, came over her, for she thought she recognised in the person before her the mysterious visitor of her younger days. She arose from her seat, and

addressing herself to her strange visitor, said : 'Is there anything you want with me, my good woman ?'

The person in black raised her veil, and Lizzie recognised before her Dr. Spence's cousin, the Honourable Laura Mapleson. Her amazement increased, and she was about to speak when Laura interrupted her by saying :

'I see you are surprised to see me here. Do not, I beg of you, disturb yourself ; but pray be seated. I have ascertained that you would be alone, and I have come to tell you something which greatly concerns those nearest and dearest to you.

'Listen patiently, and please do not interrupt me. George Spence, as you know, is my cousin. We were children together. Passionately, tenderly, I loved that man ; and my love for him increased as time went on. His parents wished him to make me his wife, but he refused. He repelled my love, gave his heart to an orphan, a sickly black-haired girl, a poor little dressmaker who was struggling hard to keep up a decent appearance. She was a poor creature, with a pale face and winning manner, who had seen in her youth better and more prosperous days. Her name was Bessie Turner. He was young, only twenty-four, then ; but he loved her, and she loved him. Contrary to his parents' wish, unknown to them and to me, he married her. I discovered their marriage, and he, finding his secret known, wrote and told his parents. They disin-

herited him, disowned him, turned away from him: George had studied, and was clever at his profession; so finding how matters stood, he accepted a situation in the country as assistant to a doctor.

‘He was now entirely in my hands. I had never ceased to show him the greatest apparent kindness, after and before his marriage. I did so for my own ends. I doubled my seeming interest now. I visited them very often. I used to be with Bessie when he was absent. Poor innocent fool, she believed in me, trusted me, clung to me! For her sake—I was not blind, I saw it all, but I waited my time—for her sake, George tolerated me. Oh, how I hated that woman—how it wrung my soul to see their mutual love and happiness! I resolved that I would crush their joy, and if possible separate them. I soon found out her weak point, a devoted woman’s weakness, a jealous love for her husband.

‘This is how I succeeded. George had an only sister whom he dearly loved, and who dearly loved him. She and Bessie had never met. All intercourse with George or his wife was forbidden his sister. I used to visit his sister; I was the go-between. His parents knew nothing of this or of my visits to George. I made them believe that now I had done with him entirely.

‘I set to work about poisoning Bessie’s mind. I made up a story of another love of George’s, of an old affection that had revived. I made the poor girl sensitive, restless, anxious, and unhappy. I

persuaded George to tell her nothing of his visit to his sister—or of a speedy reconciliation which he hoped to effect with his parents. I prevailed upon him to leave it for a happy surprise. I got George to absent himself from time to time on business for me, and then denied that such was the case to Bessie. George's absence from home, from time to time, confirmed her suspicions. The day came for striking the fatal blow. I had worked upon the white-faced girl's mind till she was nigh beside herself with jealousy. I arranged a meeting between George and his sister, and told the wife that her faithless husband had arranged a meeting with her rival. She refused to believe me, so I undertook to convince her. We followed George, and I hid her at a distance where she could see their meeting. They met—brother and sister—and it was an affectionate meeting after a long separation. Bessie saw it. It was too much for the sickly girl; she fainted. My object was gained. We returned to George's house. I had arranged that he should not return for a few days, as he was to negotiate some business for me in London. Bessie listened to my advice, and resolved to leave her home. I gave her money, and told her where to go. She left behind her a letter telling George that she had long struggled against and refused to believe her suspicions of his unfaithfulness; that what she had seen that day had convinced her. She told him that she did not believe he

would seek after her, and that even if he did it would be useless ; that she parted with him for ever in this world. She forgave him, but would trouble him no more.

‘I promised to shield her flight. I did so. On the third day I wrote to George to say that I had called at his house, but had found no one at home ; that I would wait in the village, as I was anxious. He returned in hot haste. I met him. We searched the house and found the letter she had written. I shall never forget the effects of that note upon my cousin. The whole truth flashed upon the unhappy man. He struggled and reeled like one in a fit. I tried to calm him. He rushed from the house. It was pouring in torrents at the time. At length, after some hours, he returned wet through, cold and ill. The next morning he was in the burning delirium of fever. I watched him, and nursed him. My heart smote me, but still I determined to carry out my little revenge. Suffice it to say that after a time—and after a severe relapse—he was out of danger. But what a change! The brown curly hair was white, as you have seen it ; the face so thin, and the body weak. He had raved much about Bessie in his delirium.’

‘Did he never find her?’ asked Lizzie, terror-stricken, yet fascinated with a strange fascination, and listening eagerly to Laura.

‘No. I took care of that. I put him on the wrong track. I hid her away in the great city.

Some three months after she left him a child was born to her—a girl. Bessie lodged with a kind-hearted woman, a Catholic. Bessie's health had suffered so greatly from the strain that had been put upon it, that she did not survive long to be a happy mother. She quickly sank. The woman with whom she lived brought in a Catholic Priest to see her; he instructed her in his religion, baptized the infant, and tended the mother till her death !'

'Poor, poor Bessie Spence ! did she then die a Catholic ?'

'Yes ; I was with her till the last. I did not leave her as the end drew nigh. When death was coming fast, I would have whispered to her to curse her husband with her last breath ; but the Priest was there, and he told her to pray for him, and to bless him. She poured forth her heart's love in prayer, and, taking her child in her arms, she kissed her, and prayed aloud that she might live to love and bless her father. That she might bring him to the same happiness which was then hers, of dying a Catholic. With that prayer on her lips, she sank back and died. Oh, how I have hated Priests ever since !'

'And the poor child,' asked Lizzie, 'have you seen or heard anything of her since ?'

'Yes, she lives ! For many years I was glad that she was a Catholic. It would, I thought, aid my plans. George would never dream of any of

his being Catholics. I represented myself to the Priest as the nearest relative of the deceased, and promised to take charge of the child, and if possible to restore her to her father. He believed me; what reason had he to doubt me? I gave the delicate little mite to the care of the good woman who had lodged and sheltered George's wife. She had lately lost her own child, so she willingly took charge of Bessie's little daughter. I visited them often, and paid liberally for the child's keep. The woman's husband died. I induced her to move to another part of London; still I visited her and paid her. At last I came one day to claim the child, but hot words ensued, for she refused to give her up——'

'Oh! spare me! spare me!' said Lizzie, unable to restrain her feelings. 'Is it true? or do I dream? You are the lady that I——'

'Yes,' coldly interrupted Laura. 'It is true! I see you know the rest. You are Bessie Spence's child, and George Spence is your father! You have lived to gain his heart and love. You have lived to make him a Catholic! a month ago he knew nothing about this secret of your life which I had kept so well. An unforeseen accident led him upon the right scent at last. I had done all in my power to prevent it. I had spent a small fortune to get him blinded with lies and false reports; I had led him over half the globe in search of her whom I knew to be dead. But now he has found out the lie; he has learnt the truth!

Seventeen years had gone by, and I thought that I was safe; and that you were lost. I met you, as you know, at Biarritz. My heart almost relented at the sight of you. Your mother's ring, which I took from her child-hand, I gave to you, after removing the name inscribed within it. I thought it better with you than with myself; for you had risen in form and features so like the dead, that a superstitious fear overcame me, and in a weak moment I forgot my hate. I little dreamt that you would ever meet your father. You know the rest! You have come between me and him, whom of all men alone I have loved, and whom now I hate, and upon whom I have sworn to avenge myself. He shall live, but in sorrow and in sadness. A blighted existence shall be his. But this I have resolved, he shall not love his new-found child, and live for her as he would have lived for his old love, who was his wife and your mother!

So saying Laura drew from her bosom a small pistol, and before Lizzie could recover from her surprise, the weapon was discharged at her. The pale-faced girl reeled and fell at her assailant's feet. With a terrible look of revengeful triumph, the wily woman of the world put back the weapon into her bosom, and taking up the body of her prostrate victim, hurled it into the stream below. Then gathering her cloak about her, she climbed the bank at the back of the summer-house and hurried through the woods into the open field beyond.

The sun was setting. A red glare like blood was in the sky ; and the trees seemed tinged with blood. Blood seemed floating in little wavelets over the gay waters of the rippling stream. There seemed to come a sudden hush over nature, as though the animate and inanimate creation had paused in its song of universal joy to shudder at a deed of blood !

Laura heeded it not, but hurried on. A swift and terrible judgment was in store for her. Her foot sank into the ground. She fell. She had trodden on a wasps' nest. Before she could raise herself, the infuriated insects were upon her. She arose and tried to beat them off. They crowded upon her, stinging her neck and face and hands. She strove to rid herself of the strange punishment that pursued her. The more she strove, the more they closed in upon her. More exasperated than ever, they settled upon her, driving into her flesh their deep venomous stings. In agony and pain she sought to rid herself of their presence by flight. Still they followed her. She hurried on, blinded and maddened by pain. She slipped—she reeled—she fell. A heavy thud, a suppressed scream, and she lay a bruised and bleeding mass of humanity in the darksome depth of the old disused quarry, where her victim, the pale-faced girl, had stood and shuddered, as she thought of the horror of a fall into that dreadful darkness !

CHAPTER XXIII.

LIFE AND DEATH !

THERE are many worries and anxieties of a Priest's life of which the external world knows nothing. It is true that the good pastor's days are full of consolations, but many sorrows and much solicitude shoot their dark threads among the golden joys of his priestly office, and weave themselves into the wondrous woof of his life. So it was with Father Ely. Not the least anxiety of his daily ministry was that very work which was his greatest consolation, the poor school attached to St. Wilfrid's mission. It could not be otherwise ; for each and every one of those children his heart yearned with a holy affection, and over them he watched with careful love. It was the aim of his life to make them thorough Catholics and good and useful members of society. On their religious and secular education he spared neither pains nor money. It was sometimes said that he spoilt the children by over-great kindness ; but he did but laugh, and say that nothing set wrong right so easily as kindness, and if that were his only failing, he was not afraid of the judgment of the all-kind Judge !

Lizzie's absence from the school was greatly felt. Although she held but a subordinate position, yet her influence was very great. The head-mistress of the school was almost all that could be wished,

but it was apparent to the good Priest that a great deal of the work—the hard work—of the school was done by Lizzie Mount. In a quiet simple manner she exercised a wonderful influence on all around her. The knack she possessed of maintaining order was indeed wonderful. Although the head-mistress got all the praise, yet the absence of Lizzie for a short time only convinced Father Ely of her value in the school. She had a way of managing not only the children, but even those above her without their knowing it. She seemed born to command.

Father Ely often thanked God that the child's life had been turned into the right path. In her powerfully energetic nature, her strong sympathies and the almost fascinating influence of her quiet ways, he saw a nature capable of great good; but he shuddered lest a knowledge of her own powers should cause her to lean solely upon her strength of character and end in a wrecked life. He saw plainly that for her there could be no middle course—she must either be very good or very bad. It was well for her that she did not know the power she had of influencing others, that she was ignorant that she exercised it.

It was the thorough knowledge of this child's character that had caused her spiritual Father to object to her being sent away, after Mrs. Mount's death, to receive a liberal education with girls above her own position in a Convent School. For

the same reason he insisted upon her keeping to her old station in life, even in the altered circumstances of her position ; and forbade May Cumberland to lavish upon her those favours which her kind heart prompted her to bestow on her new-found charge.

May had gone to her long rest, and a new phase of life would soon dawn upon Lizzie. She was to be given to an earthly father's love and care ! She was to know and realize that she was not a poor man's child ; that the position in life in which a strange good fortune, or rather an all-seeing and wise Providence had raised her, was hers by right and title of her earthly birthright ! What would be the influence of this knowledge to a heart like hers ? Would she still stand in the deep foundations of humility, or would 'pride of life' spoil all ? Gentle reader, do not wonder that the good Priest redoubled his prayers and watched with anxious solicitude, for his years of ministry had taught him what human nature is.

So the good Priest had decided to fulfil his promise, and visit, at least for a few hours, the pleasant retreat in Fernshire where Lizzie and Mrs. Kemp were staying. Old Bolton had driven over to the railway-station at the nearest post-town to meet his Reverence and bring him to Hope Lodge.

The sun was sinking low in the horizon as they drove up to the Lodge-gates. Father Ely had

been saying his Office, so that he had not particularly noticed the commencement of the glorious sunset of that bright autumn day. When they arrived at the house, they were met by the kindly welcomes of Mrs. Kemp. After many kind inquiries, she addressed herself to old Bolton, saying:

‘Will you go, please, and tell Miss Lizzie that Father Ely has arrived? You will probably find her by the lake, or in the summer-house. I wonder she hasn’t returned; she said she would be back before sunset.’

The old soldier gave the pony and trap in charge of the stable-boy who had appeared on the scene, and with a light heart and still firm step, soon disappeared among the trees. The glare of the sunset gave a rosy hue to the atmosphere, and bathed the landscape in its red light. As Bolton was wending his way towards the lake, he suddenly heard the report of a pistol, and the splash as of the falling of a body in the water. He hurried on. Looking up to the summer-house, which presently was in sight, he saw that it was empty; then he glanced along the path, and in doing so his eyes rested upon the stream, and he saw what he at once recognised to be the form of Lizzie Mount. Without a moment’s hesitation he swung himself forward by means of a bough which overhung the stream, and drew the body to the bank. He then carefully lifted it from the water and placed it upon the greensward. He wasted no

time. An old soldier, he had been on many a battlefield, and assisted many times the surgeons in their search for, and care of, the wounded. He detected the pulsation of the blood, and knew that life was not extinct—although the breathing was scarcely perceptible. The nature of the wound did not greatly alarm him; so, after staunching the slight flow of blood, he carefully and gently carried the fragile form of the insensible maiden to the Lodge.

We shall not stop to describe the grief and wonder of the good Priest and of the kind-hearted Mrs. Kemp at the sudden and terrible calamity that had happened. Old Bolton hurried on for the nearest doctor, and in due time returned. Before leaving, the good old soldier had in a few words given instructions as to what he thought should be done under the circumstances, and when the medical man arrived, he complimented him on his thoughtful foresight.

Lizzie remained for a long while insensible, and not till some time after she had given signs of re-animation did any sign of consciousness return. It was absolutely necessary that all noise, and the least excitement, should be carefully restrained. Minnie Redmond was telegraphed for, and for days she and the gentle Mrs. Kemp nursed the patient through the fever which supervened.

A diligent search was instituted for some indication that should discover the perpetrator of

the horrible crime. On the third day a black veil, hanging on a bramble-bush over the disused quarry, led to the discovery of the lifeless mangled remains of the would-be murderess. Old Bolton, who made the discovery, at once communicated the news to Father Ely, who was still staying at Hope Lodge, and the body was quietly removed by the police with as little excitement as possible. An inquest was held, and a verdict of accidental death returned. The body having been identified as that of the Honourable Laura Mapleson, it was buried in the pretty little Protestant churchyard, not far from Hope Lodge, in Farnshire.

By the doctor's orders Lizzie was for the present kept in complete ignorance of the fate of the unhappy woman who had attempted her life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

TWO months had passed since the incident related in the last chapter had occurred. We must take our good readers back to the old familiar house in Great Burley Street. 'May's room,' as it was still called, looked bright and cheerful; the curtains were drawn and the fire burning brightly, for the weather had set in sharp and cold, and the days were short. Lizzie was

sitting with George Spence in that little sanctum where many and many a time he had been the subject of her conversation with the sister friend who had gone to her eternal home. Though somewhat paler, and looking a trifle older for her sufferings and the sickness through which she had passed, the pale-faced maiden had grown strong and well again.

The Doctor had suffered more than anyone but his good friend Father Ely knew. May's death had greatly affected him; the anxiety of his search, and the excitement of his journey, had almost worn him out, and then, on his arrival, he had found his recovered child—the darling treasure—the image and the child of the dear dead wife—just snatched from a sudden and terrible death. Through all her sickness he nursed her and cared for her. And now that she was strong enough, he and Father Ely had felt that it was best for her new-found father to take her for a change and rest to some sunnier clime. It was decided to see once more the little town of Biarritz, and pay another visit to the shrine of their heavenly Mother. To make preparation for the journey they had left Hope Lodge, and were staying for a short space of time in that home which had become so dear to Lizzie.

That afternoon they had recalled the sad and eventful past. The whole story of his youth, of his marriage, of his lost love, his wanderings, and

their eventful issue, the Doctor had retold his daughter. They had compared notes together, and the whole of the dark-haired girl's history had been unravelled. The conversation between herself and the ill-fated Laura Mapleson was fixed deeply in Lizzie's memory, and she once more carefully detailed all that had been told her.

'Is it not all, dearest father,' she said, 'like a strange, strange dream? And yet the more I think about it, the more I see in it a most wonderful Providence. Dear May and I used often to pray about you, and for you; and you know now how she offered the sacrifice of her life for you, if it might be accepted.'

'It has been, Lizzie,' answered the Doctor sadly. 'My conversion has been as strange, humanly speaking, as any other portion of my life's history. And yet it was evidently my dead wife's prayer. The last prayer she breathed, you tell me, was that her child might live to bless me, and bring me to a knowledge of the Truth. You are here, and although I knew not who you were, your life made me first feel the living truth of the Catholic Church. Truly the words which were engraven on the locket which Minnie has given to you, and which contained your mother's and my hair, are wonderfully true—it has been all "for better, *not* for worse."'

'Yes, the hand of God has been in it all. A woman's jealousy drove mother from her home

and from my father's true and lasting love ; but only by a wise dispensation to give her what was better even than a happy home and a devoted love—the one true faith and a happy death in communion with the Church. To your child—to me—it gave the same rich gift—and you, dear father, have inherited the same unspeakable blessing ! How happy—how very happy and grateful—we should be !

‘Aye, Lizzie ! even May Cumberland's death is for better, *not* for worse !’

‘At times, father, it seems hard to think so ; but it *must be so, for God knows best*. And yet she loved you, dear father, very deeply, very tenderly. “*Tell him some day,*” she said to me when she was dying, “*how much I loved him.*” She had one hope, she told me—that you might return her love, that she might live to make you happy ; and when she added that you had told her, more by your manner than by your words, that of all your earthly loves you loved *me* the strongest and the best, I was pained and grieved and could not understand it. Then I did not know the secret of your life ; and I had promised my God that I would live alone for Him. But why, dear father, did you say it was for better, *not* for worse, that my darling May should die ?’

George Spence was silent for a time, and then he answered :

‘Lizzie, my dear child, had she lived, I should

have learnt to love her as she loved me, and then I should have perhaps made her my own ; but I am glad it is as it is, for I have ever made one resolution, and, since I've been a Catholic, I have made one prayer, and that is that I would be true to the memory of my first love, and never marry again. I might have forgotten my promise if God had not answered my prayer in His own way. Although it is sad, very sad to think of her strong young life, so noble, beautiful, and lovely, sacrificed so early ; yet it is surely for the best ! For after all a second *love* is never like the first, and God doesn't seem to bless it as He blesses the fresh fervent love of young hearts that join their destinies with His blessing for the first time.'

'Oh, father dear !' said Lizzie, 'how strong your love for my mother must have been, since not even death seems to have extinguished it ! How sacred her memory is to you ! Surely God knows what is best, and we must bend to His Will !'

'Yes,' replied George, 'it is best as it is. And although I feel the loss of that good May Cumberland much more than I thought I should, and begin to realize how much she had grown into my affections, although I grieve for her death for your sake, sweet child, yet I have thus been able to be faithful to the memory of her whom, of all women, I have loved so dearly. It was your likeness in feature, form, voice, and manner to your own dear

mother that drew me to you—and made me love you, and wish to befriend you, and let some sunshine in upon your poor hard life.’

‘You have told me that I am like my mother. I remember once dreaming a very strange, a remarkable dream, which I told to our good Father Ely at the time. It was this. I had been dreaming all night long about her whom I believed to be my mother—the good woman who had charge of me from infancy—Mrs. Mount. She was very sad, and I was trying to console her. Suddenly she turned away from me, and I grew very sorrowful. When she looked at me again, the figure had all at once changed, and I seemed to be looking at my own self grown older and sadder! Now I understand it all! For it was surely my own mother who had come to me, for some wise and good purpose.’

‘What did Father Ely say to you about it?’

‘He said I must not pay much heed to such things, although sometimes they were indications from the unseen world; and he promised to say Mass for my mother’s soul.’

‘What a glorious thing to be a Catholic!’ said the Doctor. ‘Ah, my sweet child! I understand it all now. For us death is not a separation, but only a farewell for a little while. Our dear dead have gone from us, it is true, but only before us. Love is stronger than Death! As the beautiful words of the hymn express it—

“Ah ! they are more our own
Since now they are God's only ;
And each one that has gone
Has left our heart less lonely.
Dear dead, they have become
Like Guardian Angels to us !”

Truly they have become Guardian Angels to us. Whilst she lived, May Cumberland was like a good Angel to you and to me ; and her gentle influence has not been spent in vain. Who shall say what we owe to her good prayers ! and now that she is one of the dear dead, surely she will guard us and pray for us. She has only gone a little while before us. To the thrice-happy day, when she and your mother, and you and I shall meet in our bright eternal home, we must look forward. I am happy now, and not ungrateful, I trust, to that kind Providence that has restored me my long-lost treasure in the possession of my child.’

‘Oh, God bless you, dearest father !’ said Lizzie, folding her arms about her father’s neck and kissing his careworn cheek. ‘I ought to be, and I am so happy ! I have two fathers now on earth, and two mothers in heaven, besides my Mother Mary ! But,’ she added, looking into her father’s face—‘but, my own dear father, you won’t interfere with my heart’s desire, will you ?’

The old look of intense pain came back to the white-haired Doctor’s face, tears filled his eyes, and he said, somewhat excitedly :

‘My darling child, you surely do not wish to

leave me? I cannot spare my new-found joy so soon. I cannot go back into a cold heartless world, and live once more, alone and sad, to brood upon the past, to live and die——!’

‘Oh, father dearest, no! No, I will not leave you! My vocation is before me. I have at times thought of a life hidden away from the world in a Convent, but Father Ely has always told me to pray and wait. He has taught me that it is possible to serve God in the world, to dedicate myself to Him, to give Him my love, to remain a hidden virgin for His sake alone, and known and beloved by Him Who is the Virgin’s Spouse, and the Virgin’s Son. You understand me, dear father. I can still serve the little ones in the school, and their dear Master and Lord; and yet not neglect my duty to my own dear earthly father! To serve you, to comfort and console you, to love you, is my duty; and those whose rule of life is “duty” need fear nothing when they come to die. So I have ever been taught by that good Priest, who has been always so kind and good to me, and watched over me, and cared for me——’

‘A thousand blessings on you, my darling daughter! I am now very happy. Truly your mother’s dying prayers have been answered; our child has lived to love and bless her father!’

That same evening Father Ely came in to wish George Spence and Lizzie God-speed on their journey.

For a short time they reviewed the past and spoke their hopes for the future. The next morning Lizzie went to get the Priest's blessing before she started.


She told the good Father of the conversation with her father on the previous evening. He then said to her :

'A good Providence has indeed watched over you, my child. May you never forget the lessons of the past ! Be good and faithful in your duty to the parent God has restored to you. Love him, and live to be his comfort in the years that come ; as long as you shall be spared to each other. He has seen much sorrow, and his heart has been well purified in the holy school of suffering. You will not forget your duty to your God in your duty to your earthly father. He whom God has given back to you, is truly a man who has learnt to fear and serve his God. To him truly may be applied the words of the good Noemi when she spoke of her kinsman Booz. "*Blessed be he of the Lord ; because the same kindness which he showed to the living, he has kept also to the dead.*" God bless and protect you both. Remember me at our dear Mother Mary's shrine.'

And with Father Ely's blessing she departed ; and father and daughter set out on their journey to that sweet spot where the heavenly Mother has answered, with such wondrous blessings, so many prayers of her faithful children.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOME.

NCE more the bright month of flowers, Mary's sunny month of May, had come. The morning was bright and cheery, and the sparrows chirped gaily on the house-tops. It was one of those days when the blood seemed to circulate more freely through the veins and sent pulsations of gladness through the heart. The mere sense of living was an intense untold joy.

The old house in Great Burley Street wore its brightest and most cheerful look. Its inmates were astir betimes. There had been much preparation on the previous evening, and much hurrying to and fro of tradesmen's boys with parcels and provisions. No. 25 was to be the festive scene of a wedding-breakfast.

If the Church of St. Wilfrid had rejoiced in a peal of bells, we are sure they would never have rung out on the morning air over a happier couple than knelt at the altar on that May day. The good little Dame Trot, Minnie Redmond, was at length to be the happy wife of good honest Tom Burke. Dressed in plain white, with trimmings of blue as became a Child of Mary, the little woman looked the picture of Christian goodness and modesty. Lizzie was there, too, and so was the happy Doctor; half-a-dozen of the young women who

were special friends of Minnie, and held office in the Confraternity to which she belonged, were her bridesmaids—dressed like herself in blue and white. George Spence had insisted on giving the repast which followed the marriage.

Amongst the various presents on the occasion were several costly gifts from George Spence and Lizzie, and a very handsomely bound Catholic family Bible from the good Priest.

There was one absent who would fain have been there, had circumstances permitted; but she was not now free to do as she chose. Violet Byrne was passing through her Noviciate with the Nuns at Woodgatetown, and so she could but pray hard in the silence of the cloister for the welfare of her old friend Minnie.

As to the rest of the Byrne family, Mr. and Mrs. B. were too much afflicted with a sudden misfortune that had happened to permit of their joining in the festivity of the occasion. As had been predicted, Mr. and Mrs. Nelson had 'come to smash.' Willie had been unable to meet his debts, and the furniture and effects of the house in Dutchland Road had fallen to the auctioneer's hammer. Effie had gone to stay with the old people. Willie was for the present keeping 'out of the way,' till things settled themselves. Of course he had lost his situation. As he had refused to allow the Doctor in any way to help him, George had been unable to be of any assistance; and, in fact, the

extravagance and reckless manner of his living, his gay propensities, and several unsuccessful 'turf adventures,' had brought Nelson to speedy and irreparable ruin, and involved him far beyond his friends' resources of help.

The happy event in Tom's and Minnie's life was celebrated with a *real* joy, and amidst the congratulations of their friends, they left the great city for a little honeymoon. Tom had gained a high position in the firm for which he was engaged, and we venture to prophesy for the good little wife that she has chosen a happy home, a devoted husband, and cheery life full of joy and sunshine.

Tom and the Doctor are great friends, and Lizzie and Minnie are as lovingly affectionate as in the old days.

May Cumberland's money has freed Father Ely from many a pressing anxiety—for to him she bequeathed a large portion for acts of charity, and the good of his mission.

Mrs. Kemp grows grey in the house where her young mistress died. She is the head of the household now, and the Doctor and Lizzie live with her. A brass plate tells of the Doctor's profession. A little free dispensary has been opened among the courts and alleys, where at certain times Dr. Spence may be consulted gratis; and the white-haired Doctor lives beloved by all who know him, especially by the poor. His kind deeds do not cease with his medical advice. His charity is great, and

his heart big, and so is his purse ; and he does not forget his duty. His cousin Laura's large fortune became his, as next of kin, at her death. He spends it all in deeds of charity, retaining for himself and his daughter his own personal fortune.

Lizzie is very happy, and labours hard at the dear-loved work, and still uses the same powerful and gentle influence for good on all around her.

We will take a last fond look at the happy home, and then bid farewell to our kind and indulgent readers.

Father Ely is playing a game of chess with the Doctor. Lizzie is busy with her needlework, and good old Mrs. Kemp is engaged as usual with her domestic duties, and the 'inevitable stocking' is being mended, or a new pair of socks knitted for the Doctor or his Reverence. Her hands are never idle.

'That is another victory for your Reverence !' said George, as they finished the game. 'It is in vain trying to beat the Church,' he added, laughing. 'She always triumphs in the end !'

'Yes ; but it isn't quite fair to compare her work to a game of chess !'

'Nor do I, Father Ely ; I liken her to a successful game of chess.'

'Well, it's true ! she loses her men, and her knights, her castles, her queens, and even her bishops at times——'

'But she gains more than she loses, Father,'

added Lizzie. 'And she gains men, and knights, and doctors and all.'

'Yes, my darling is right—isn't she, Father Ely?' asked George.

'Yes,' said Father Ely; 'but the Church struggles hard for her success for all that, and those whom she gains she makes Kings and Queens in their own right.'

'But Kings and Queens without their anxieties,' said Lizzie. 'For we put all our troubles into the hands of our spiritual Fathers.'

'Yes, Lizzie dear,' answered the Doctor; 'there is no true happiness or joy out of the Catholic Church. It is indeed a grand thing to be a Catholic.'

'True,' said Father Ely; 'and after all, the greatest suffering and the biggest sorrows are not much to pay for the inestimable gift of the True Faith.'

'And so I see it,' replied George Spence. 'And whether I look at my present happiness, or my great and glorious inheritance of the Truth as a Catholic, and compare all with the life, and misfortunes of life, through which I have passed, the truth of those words so dear to my dead wife force themselves upon me—all has been "for better, not for worse."'

POSTSCRIPT.

THIS little story was written for a local Catholic Magazine, and is reprinted by request. I thought out the plot and wrote the first two chapters many years ago, during one of my vacations in the North of England. The remainder was written, from month to month as the chapters were required, amidst the stress of daily missionary cares and labours, and at times and in places when and where little attention could be paid to style and manner. With its many defects I leave the story in the hands of an indulgent Catholic public, trusting that it may at least amuse, even though it fail to instruct.

I have tried to illustrate the great Catholic truth that 'all things come round to him that will but wait' *and pray*. To those who, on closing this book, urge that many things written therein seem most improbable, I have but one answer. I have *known* many answers to prayer very much more remarkable than anything I have *imagined* in this little volume.

L. G. V.

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